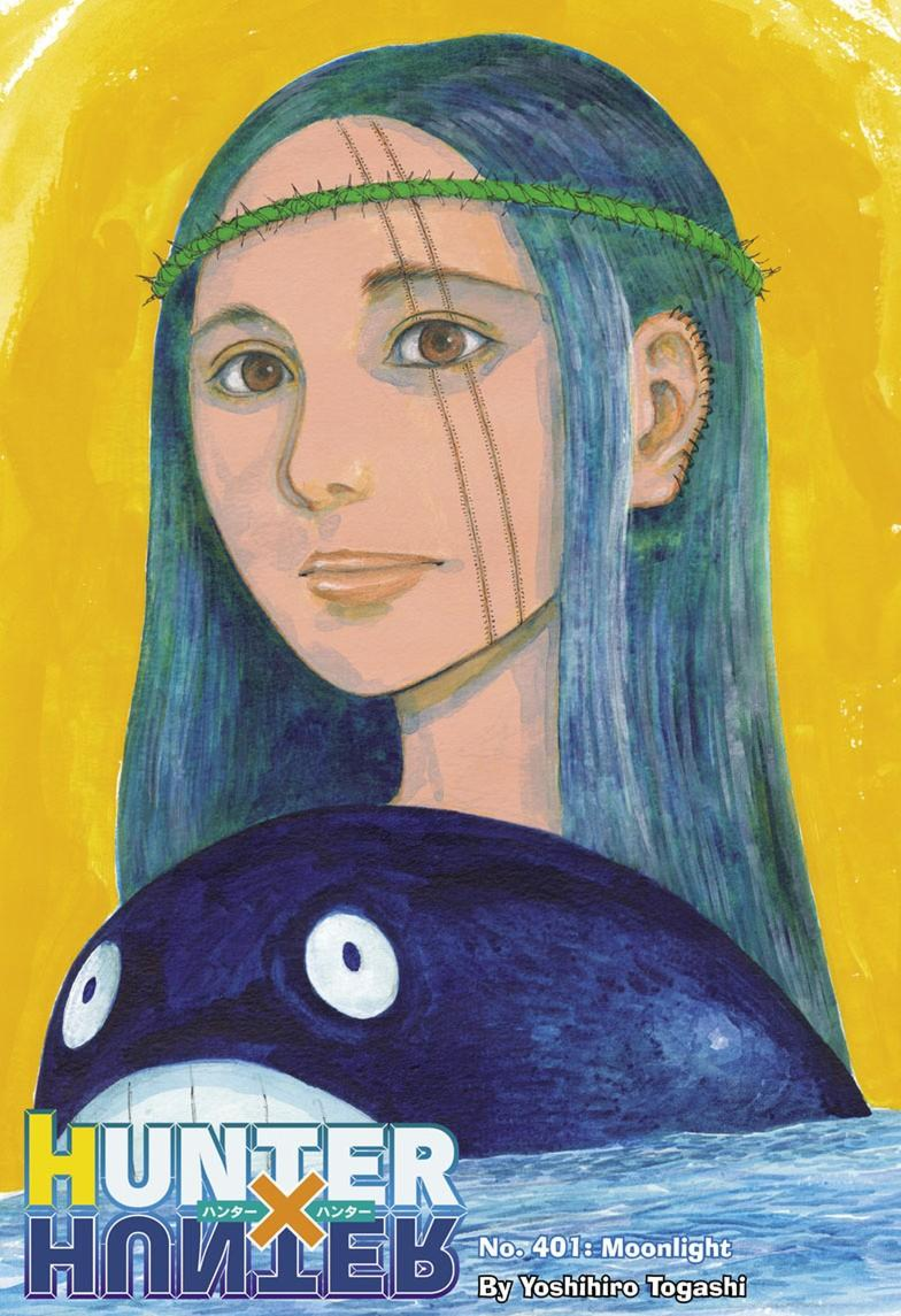

HUNTER×HUNTER

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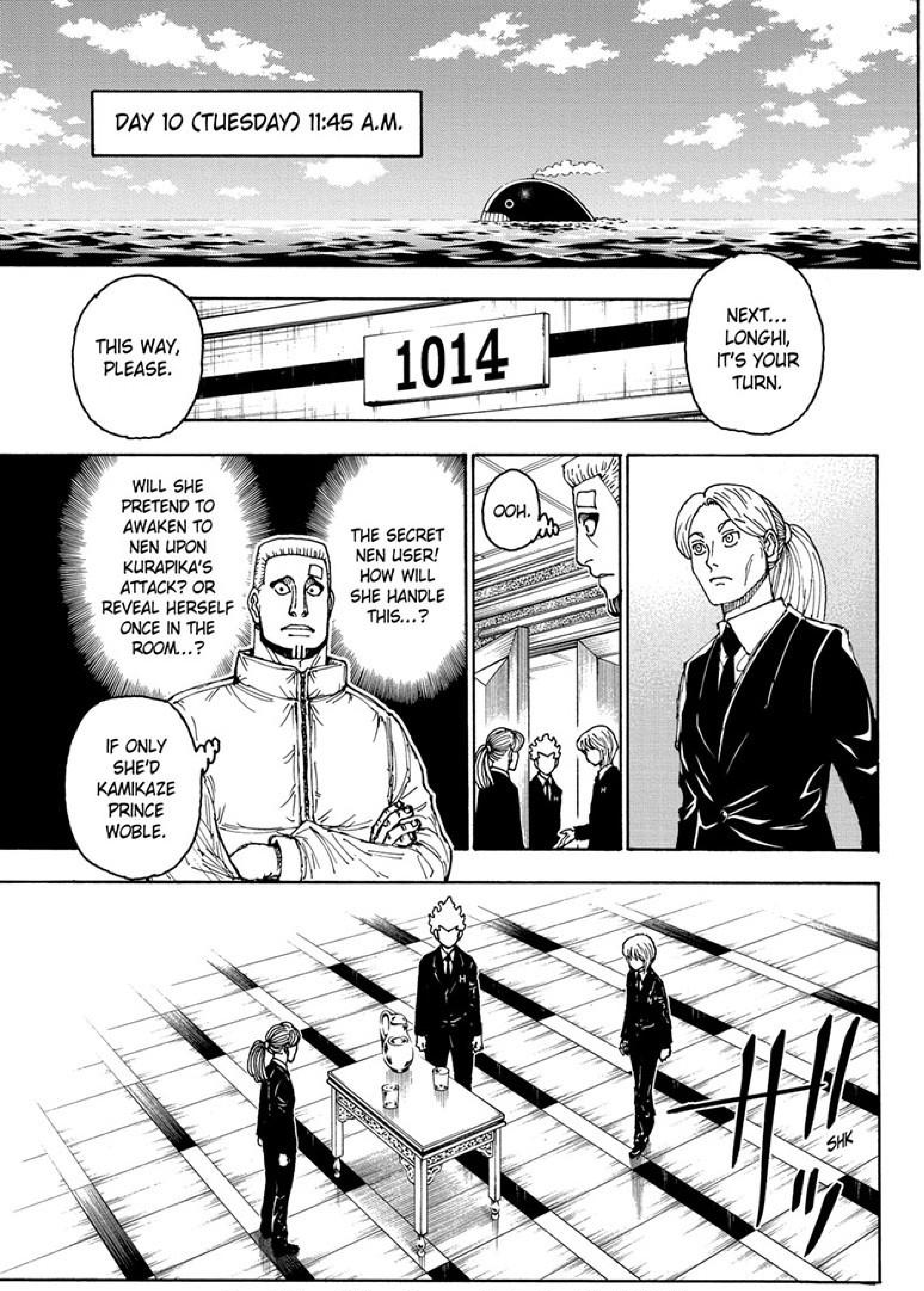
No. 401: Moonlight

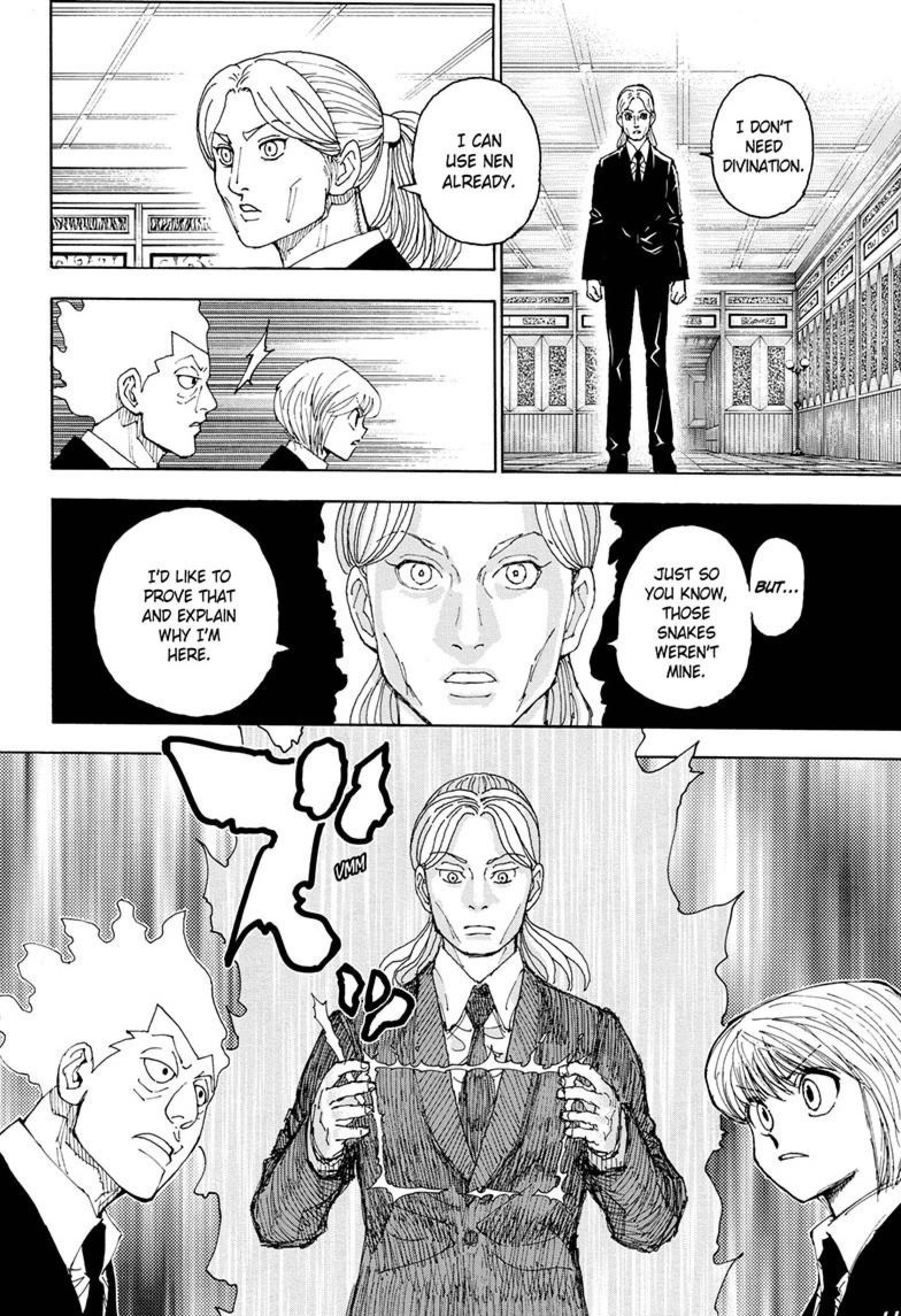
By Yoshihiro Togashi

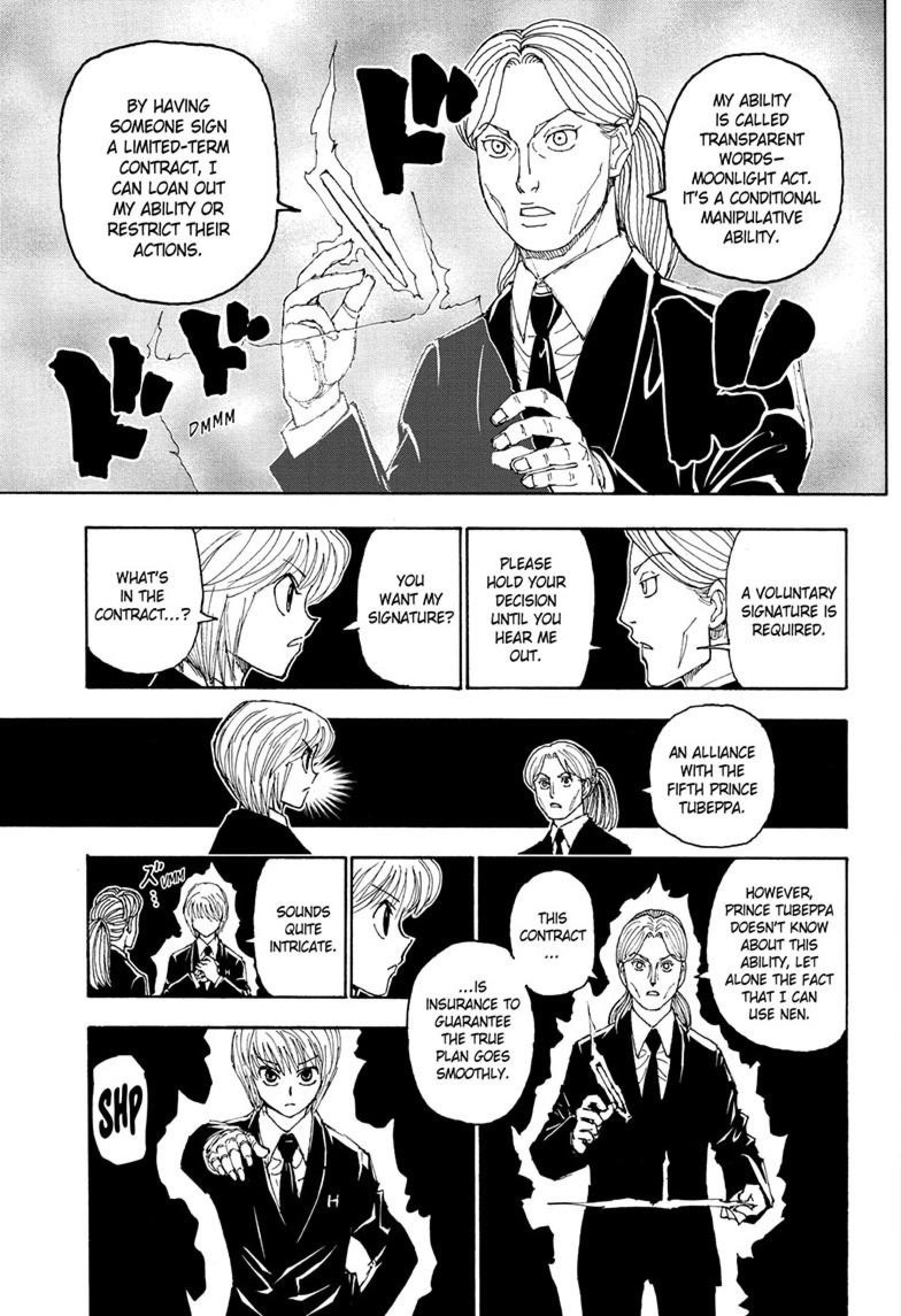
HUNTER×HUNTER

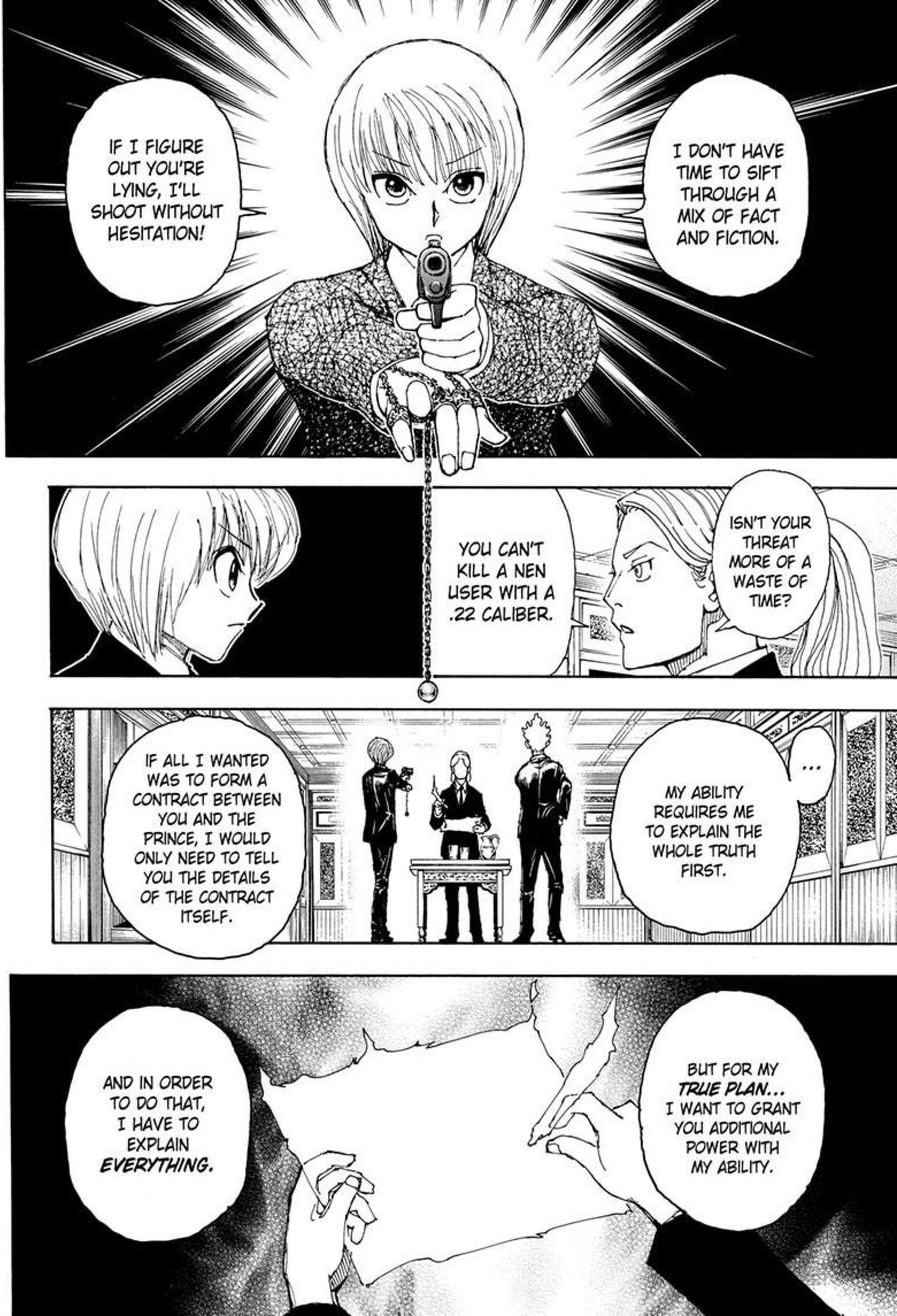
ハンター ハンター

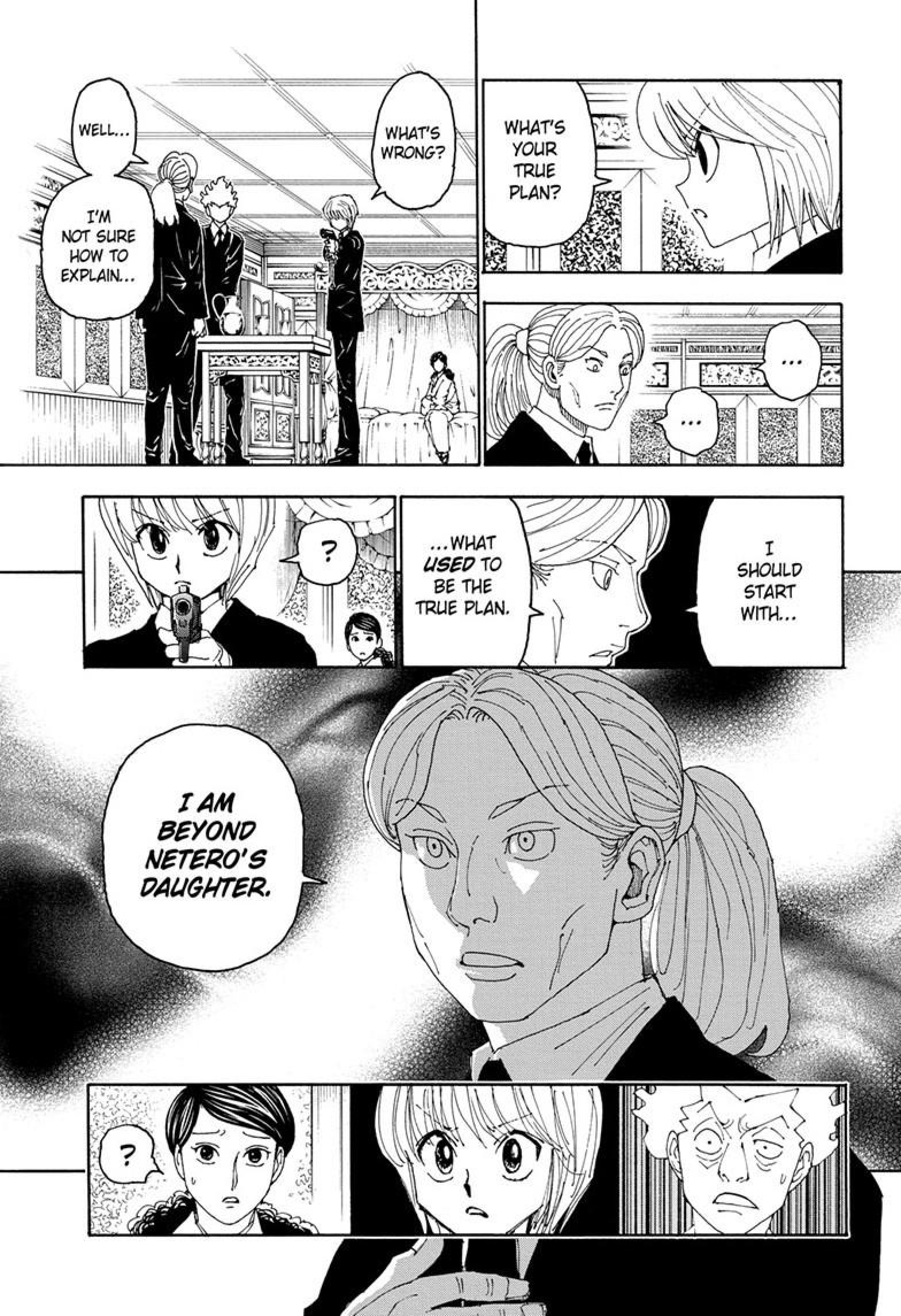

DAY 10 (TUESDAY) 11:45 A.M.
NEXT... LONGHI, IT'S YOUR TURN.
1014
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
OOH.
THE SECRET NEN USER! HOW WILL SHE HANDLE THIS...?
WILL SHE PRETEND TO AWAKEN TO NEN UPON KURAPIKA'S ATTACK? OR REVEAL HERSELF ONCE IN THE ROOM...?
IF ONLY SHE'D KAMIKAZE PRINCE WOBLE.
SHK

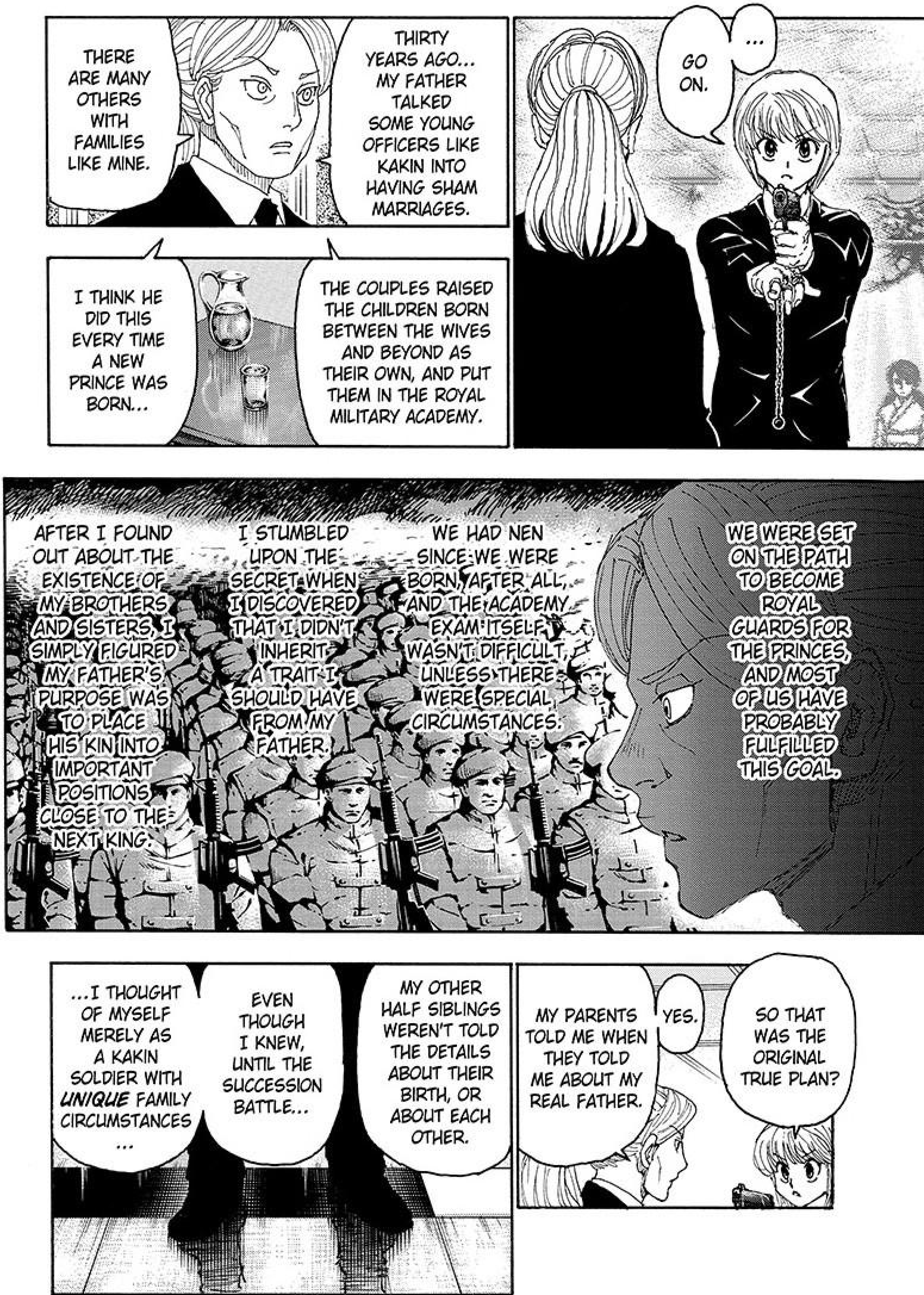
Translation: Lillian Olsen **Lettering: Mark McMurray**

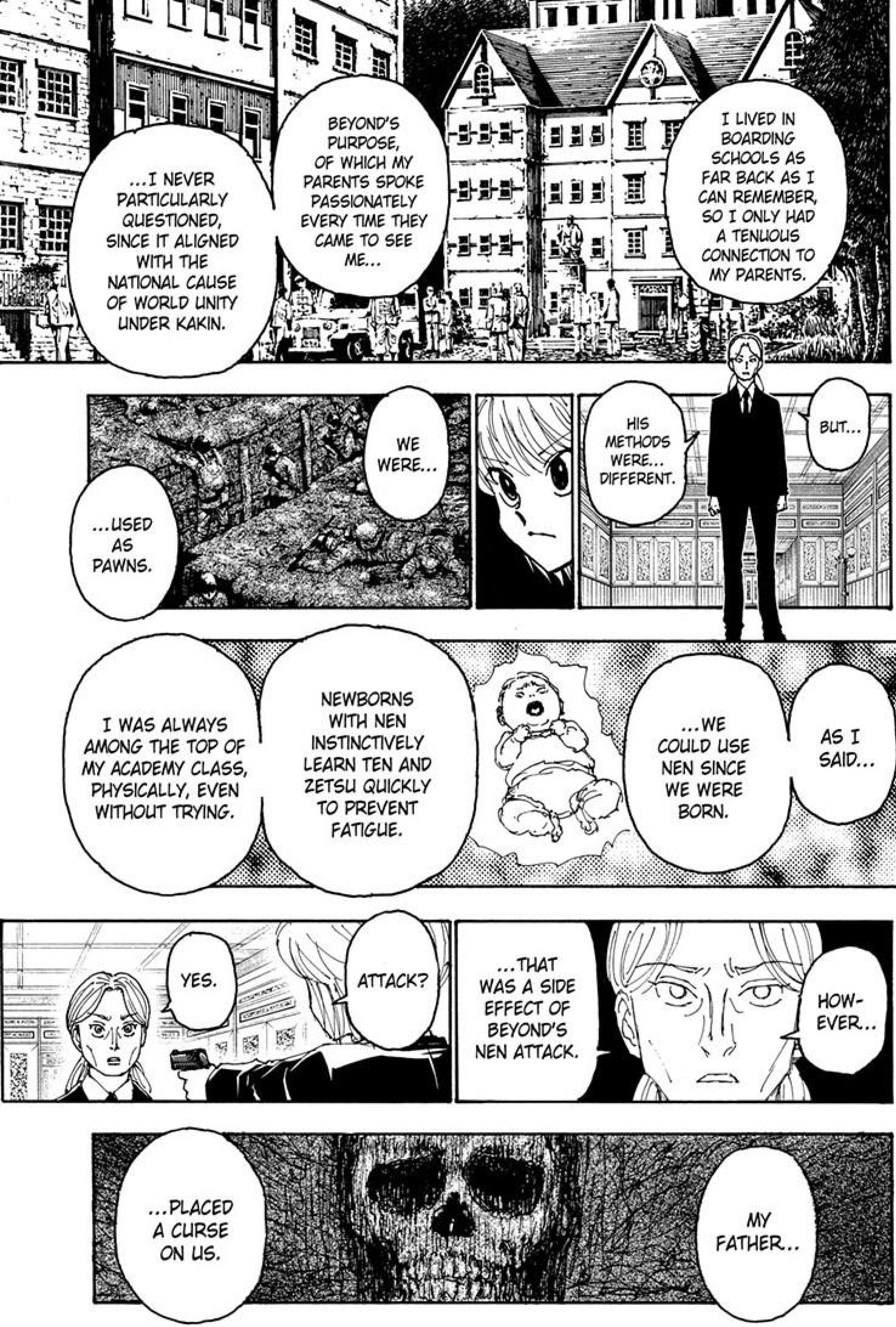

I DON'T NEED DIVINATION.
I CAN USE NEN ALREADY.
BUT...
JUST SO YOU KNOW, THOSE SNAKES WEREN'T MINE.
I'D LIKE TO PROVE THAT AND EXPLAIN WHY I'M HERE.
VMM

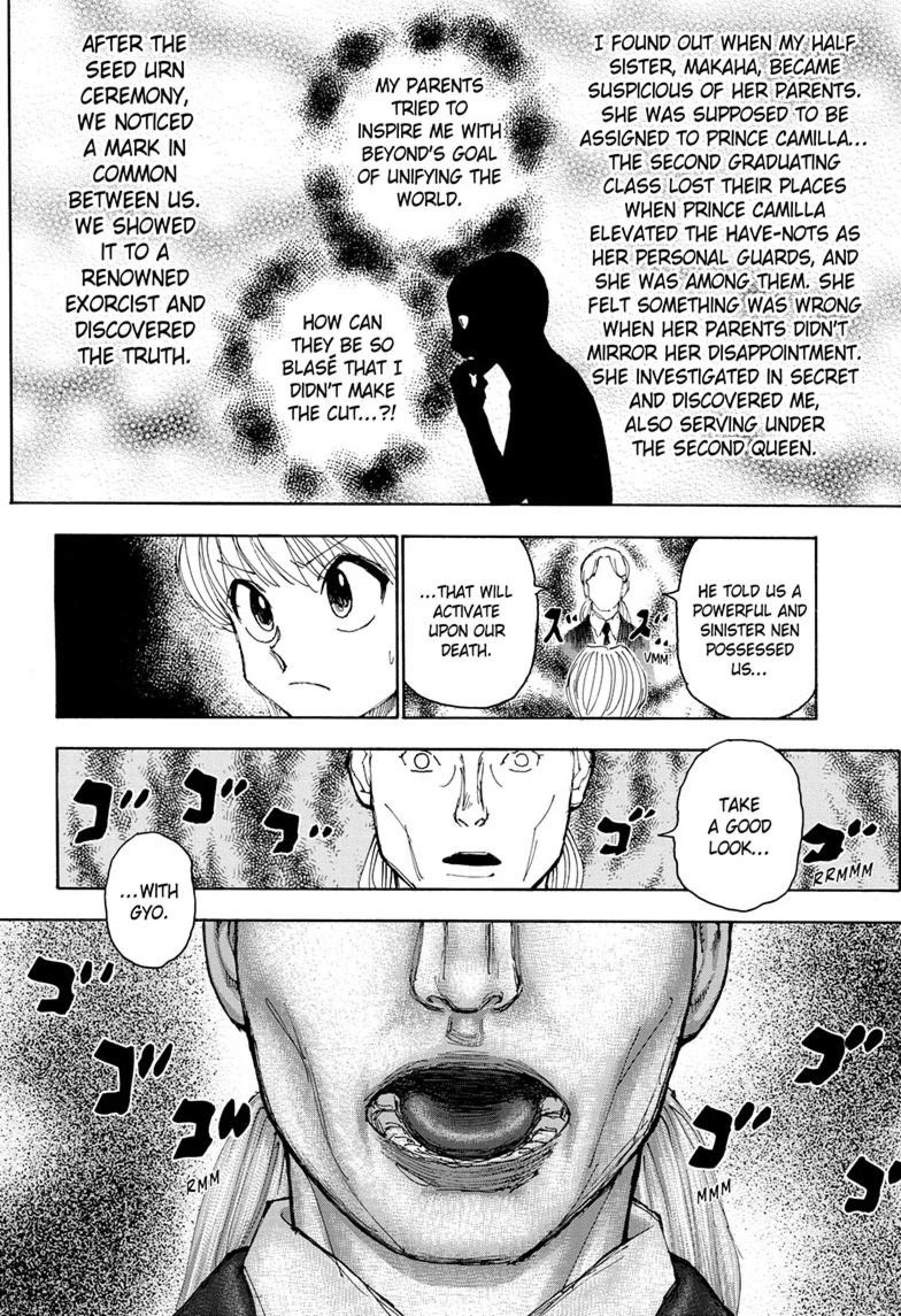

MY ABILITY IS CALLED TRANSPARENT WORDS—MOONLIGHT ACT. IT'S A CONDITIONAL MANIPULATIVE ABILITY.
BY HAVING SOMEONE SIGN A LIMITED-TERM CONTRACT, I CAN LOAN OUT MY ABILITY OR RESTRICT THEIR ACTIONS.
ドドド
DMMM
A VOLUNTARY SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED.
PLEASE HOLD YOUR DECISION UNTIL YOU HEAR ME OUT.
YOU WANT MY SIGNATURE?
WHAT'S IN THE CONTRACT...?
AN ALLIANCE WITH THE FIFTH PRINCE TUBEPPA.
HOWEVER, PRINCE TUBEPPA DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ABILITY, LET ALONE THE FACT THAT I CAN USE NEN.
THIS CONTRACT ...
...IS INSURANCE TO GUARANTEE THE TRUE PLAN GOES SMOOTHLY.
SOUNDS QUITE INTRICATE.
ズ VMM
SHP

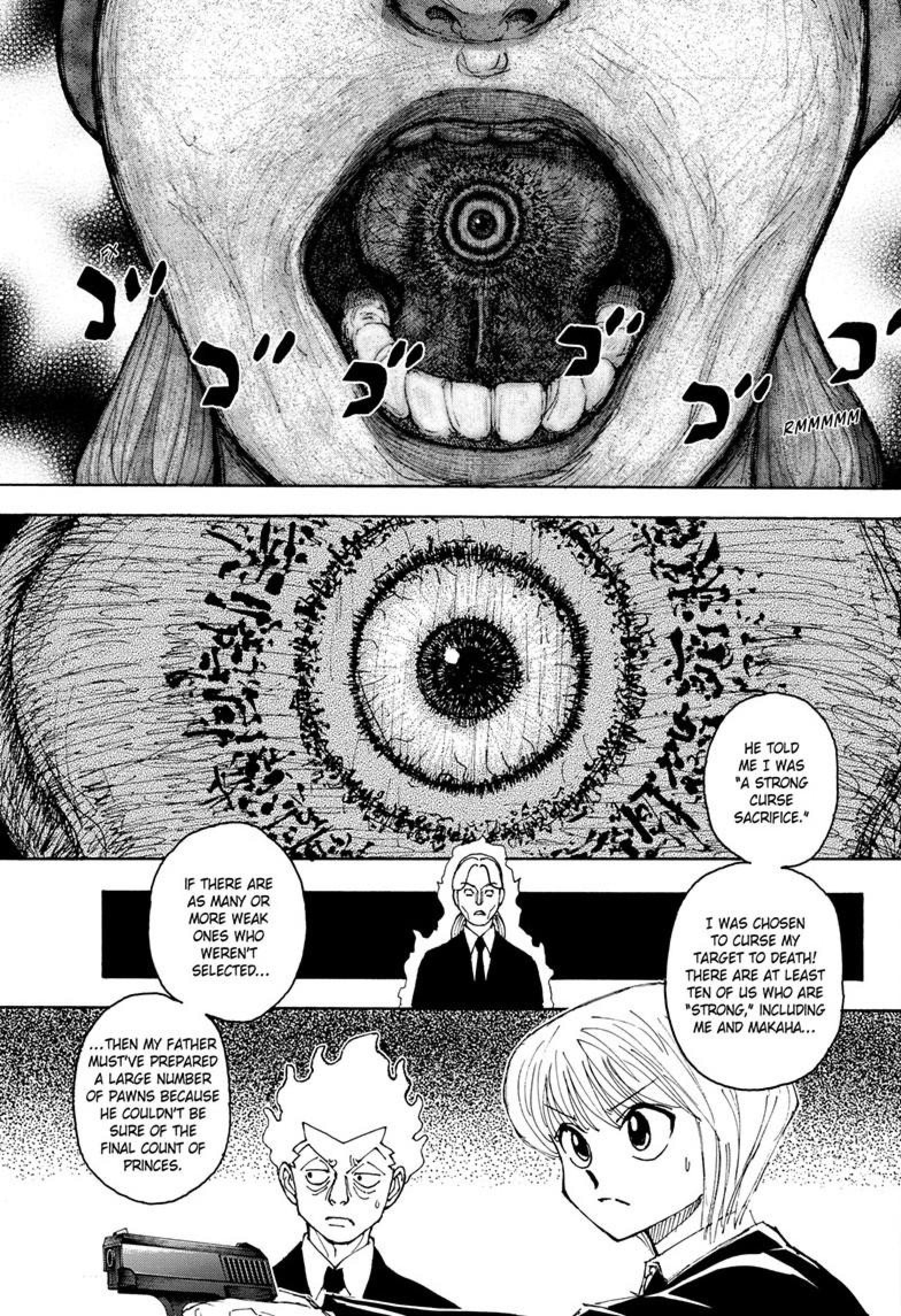

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SIFT THROUGH A MIX OF FACT AND FICTION.
IF I FIGURE OUT YOU'RE LYING, I'LL SHOOT WITHOUT HESITATION!
ISN'T YOUR THREAT MORE OF A WASTE OF TIME?
YOU CAN'T KILL A NEN USER WITH A .22 CALIBER.
...
MY ABILITY REQUIRES ME TO EXPLAIN THE WHOLE TRUTH FIRST.
IF ALL I WANTED WAS TO FORM A CONTRACT BETWEEN YOU AND THE PRINCE, I WOULD ONLY NEED TO TELL YOU THE DETAILS OF THE CONTRACT ITSELF.
BUT FOR MY TRUE PLAN... I WANT TO GRANT YOU ADDITIONAL POWER WITH MY ABILITY.
AND IN ORDER TO DO THAT, I HAVE TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.

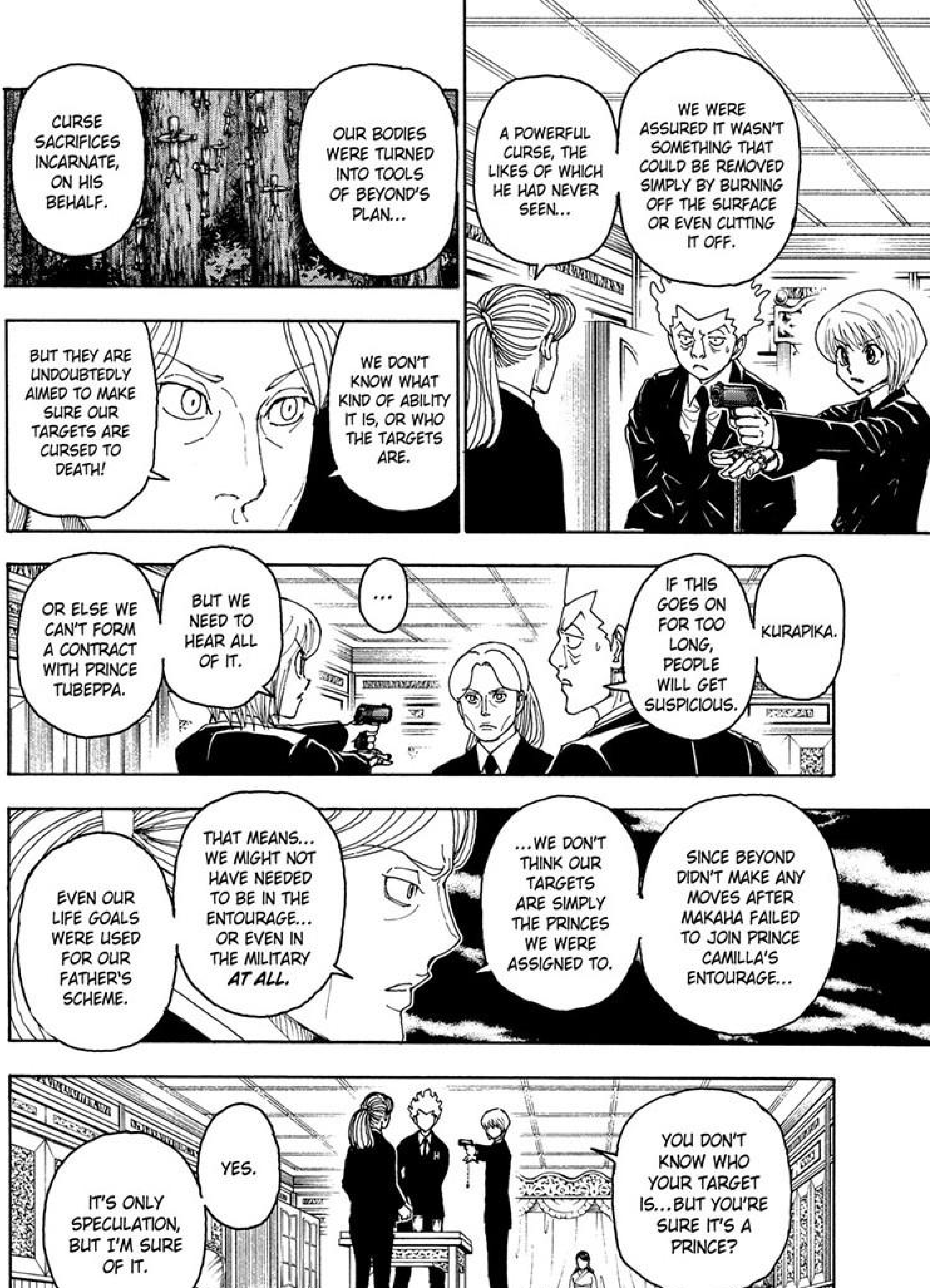

WHAT'S YOUR TRUE PLAN?
...
...
WHAT'S WRONG?
WELL...
I'M NOT SURE HOW TO EXPLAIN...
I SHOULD START WITH...
...WHAT *USED* TO BE THE TRUE PLAN.
?
I AM BEYOND NETERO'S DAUGHTER.
?

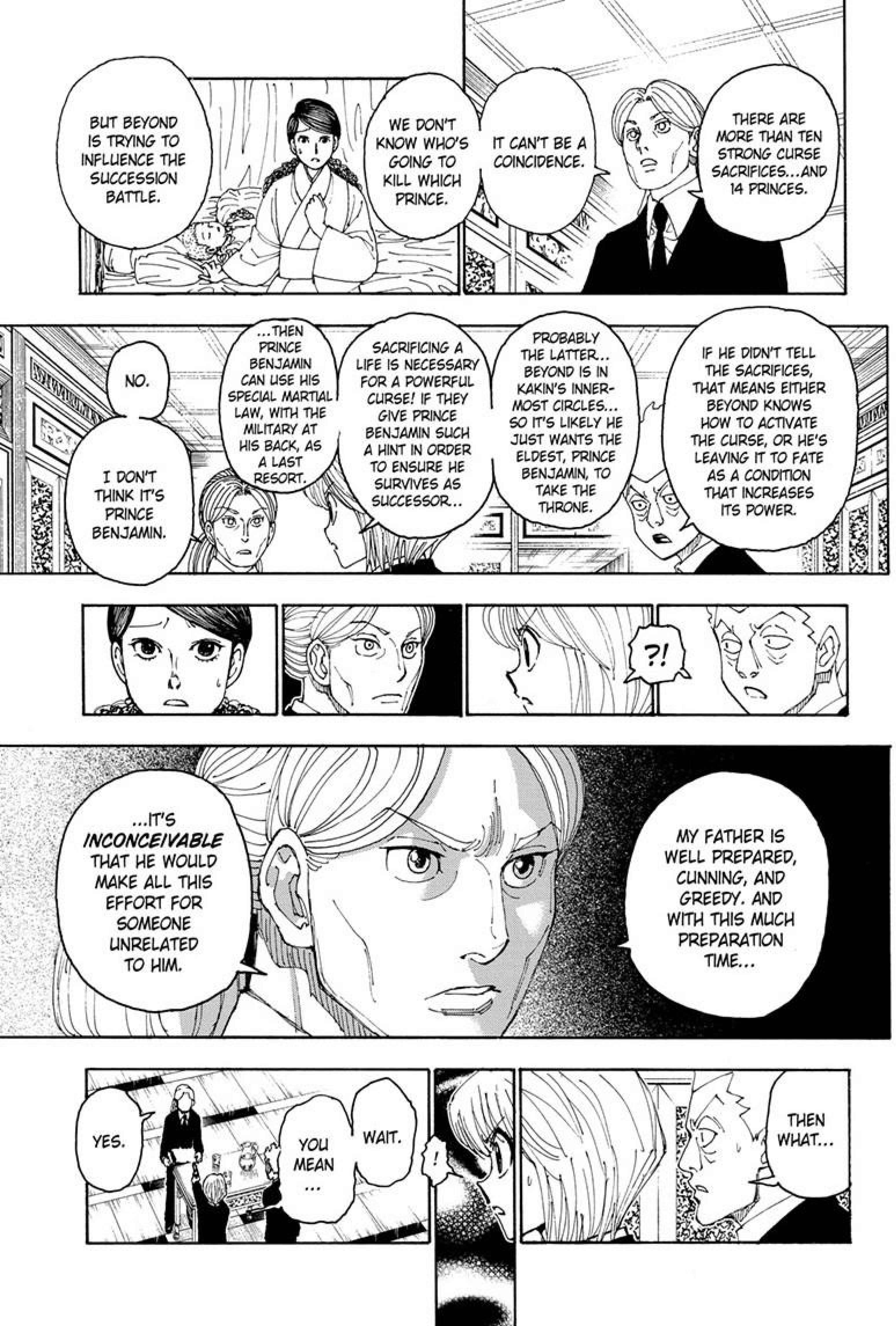

...
GO ON.
THIRTY YEARS AGO... MY FATHER TALKED SOME YOUNG OFFICERS LIKE KAKIN INTO HAVING SHAM MARRIAGES.
THERE ARE MANY OTHERS WITH FAMILIES LIKE MINE.
THE COUPLES RAISED THE CHILDREN BORN BETWEEN THE WIVES AND BEYOND AS THEIR OWN, AND PUT THEM IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.
I THINK HE DID THIS EVERY TIME A NEW PRINCE WAS BORN...
WE WERE SET ON THE PATH TO BECOME ROYAL GUARDS FOR THE PRINCES, AND MOST OF US HAVE PROBABLY FULFILLED THIS GOAL.
WE HAD NEN SINCE WE WERE BORN, AFTER ALL, AND THE ACADEMY EXAM ITSELF WASN'T DIFFICULT, UNLESS THERE WERE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.
I STUMBLED UPON THE SECRET WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT I DIDN'T INHERIT A TRAIT I SHOULD HAVE FROM MY FATHER.
AFTER I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I SIMPLY FIGURED MY FATHER'S PURPOSE WAS TO PLACE HIS KIN INTO IMPORTANT POSITIONS CLOSE TO THE NEXT KING.
SO THAT WAS THE ORIGINAL TRUE PLAN?
YES.
MY PARENTS TOLD ME WHEN THEY TOLD ME ABOUT MY REAL FATHER.
MY OTHER HALF SIBLINGS WEREN'T TOLD THE DETAILS ABOUT THEIR BIRTH, OR ABOUT EACH OTHER.
EVEN THOUGH I KNEW, UNTIL THE SUCCESSION BATTLE...
...I THOUGHT OF MYSELF MERELY AS A KAKIN SOLDIER WITH *UNIQUE* FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES ...

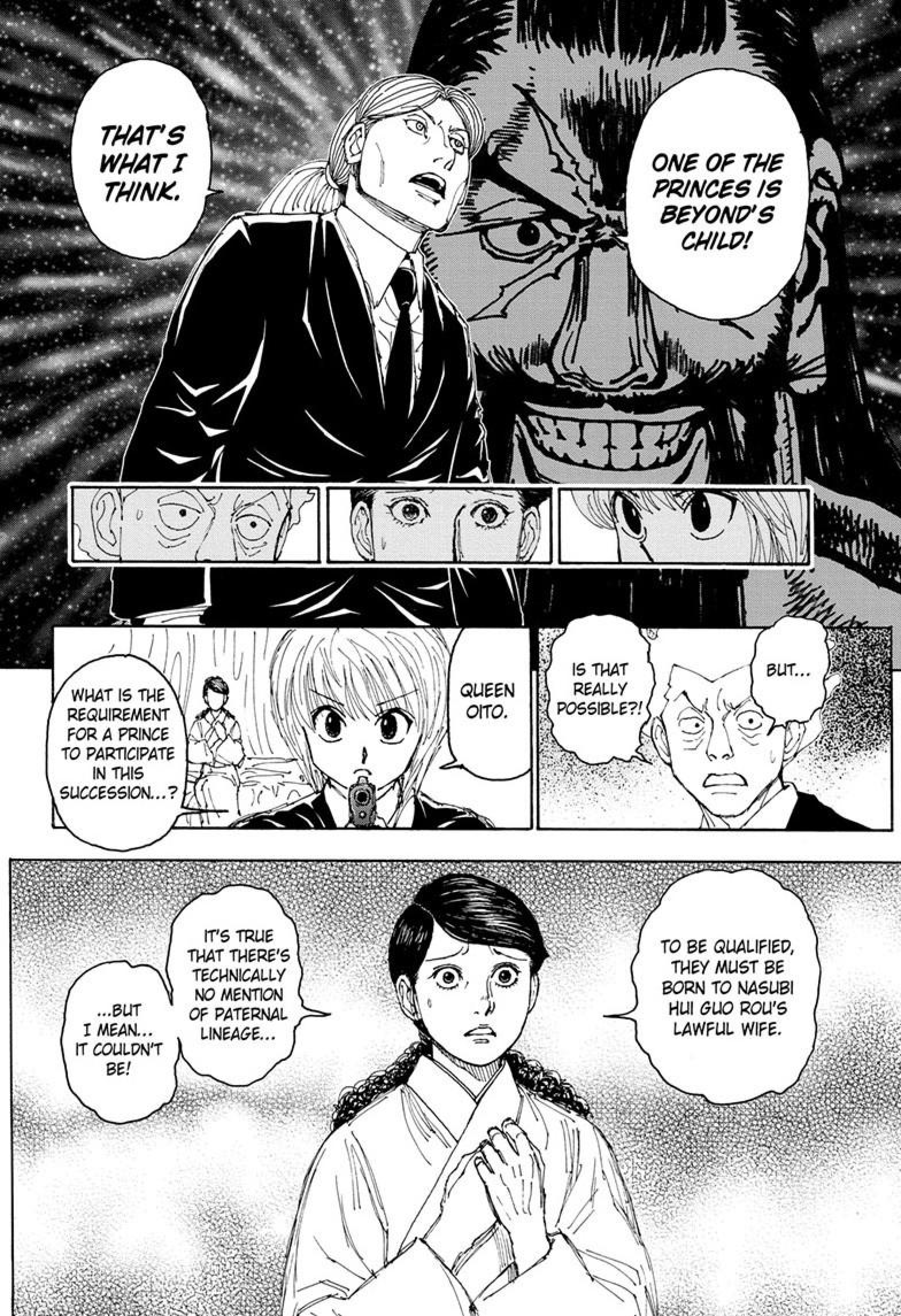

I LIVED IN BOARDING SCHOOLS AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, SO I ONLY HAD A TENUOUS CONNECTION TO MY PARENTS.
BEYOND'S PURPOSE, OF WHICH MY PARENTS SPOKE PASSIONATELY EVERY TIME THEY CAME TO SEE ME...
...I NEVER PARTICULARLY QUESTIONED, SINCE IT ALIGNED WITH THE NATIONAL CAUSE OF WORLD UNITY UNDER KAKIN.
BUT...
HIS METHODS WERE... DIFFERENT.
WE WERE...
...USED AS PAWNS.
AS I SAID...
...WE COULD USE NEN SINCE WE WERE BORN.
NEWBORNS WITH NEN INSTINCTIVELY LEARN TEN AND ZETSU QUICKLY TO PREVENT FATIGUE.
I WAS ALWAYS AMONG THE TOP OF MY ACADEMY CLASS, PHYSICALLY, EVEN WITHOUT TRYING.
HOW-EVER...
...THAT WAS A SIDE EFFECT OF BEYOND'S NEN ATTACK.
ATTACK?
YES.
MY FATHER..
...PLACED A CURSE ON US.

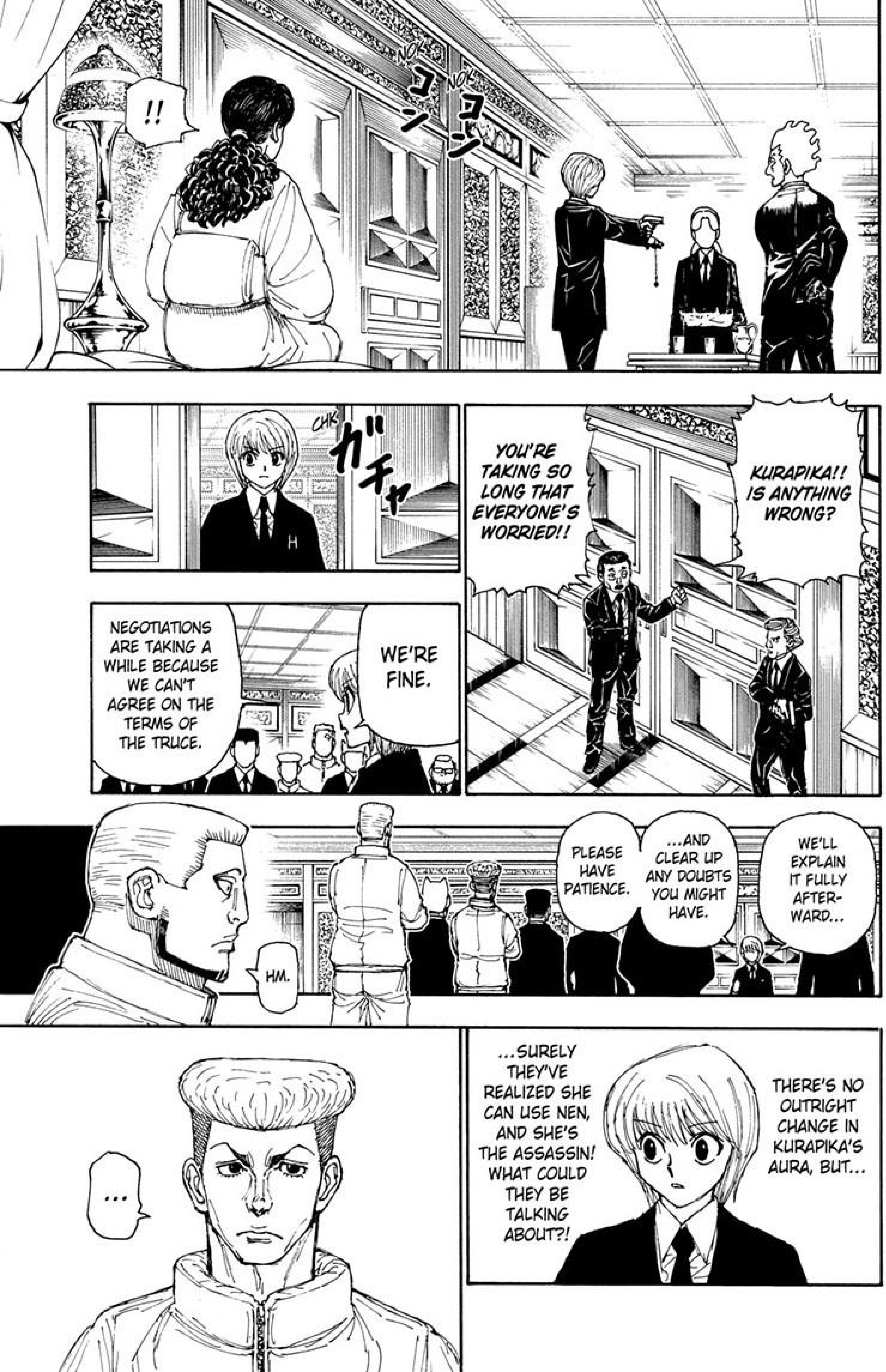

I FOUND OUT WHEN MY HALF SISTER, MAKAHA, BECAME SUSPICIOUS OF HER PARENTS. SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ASSIGNED TO PRINCE CAMILLA... THE SECOND GRADUATING CLASS LOST THEIR PLACES WHEN PRINCE CAMILLA ELEVATED THE HAVE-NOTS AS HER PERSONAL GUARDS, AND SHE WAS AMONG THEM. SHE FELT SOMETHING WAS WRONG WHEN HER PARENTS DIDN'T MIRROR HER DISAPPOINTMENT. SHE INVESTIGATED IN SECRET AND DISCOVERED ME, ALSO SERVING UNDER THE SECOND QUEEN.
MY PARENTS TRIED TO INSPIRE ME WITH BEYOND'S GOAL OF UNIFYING THE WORLD.
HOW CAN THEY BE SO BLASÉ THAT I DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT...?!
AFTER THE SEED URN CEREMONY, WE NOTICED A MARK IN COMMON BETWEEN US. WE SHOWED IT TO A RENOWNED EXORCIST AND DISCOVERED THE TRUTH.
HE TOLD US A POWERFUL AND SINISTER NEN POSSESSED US...
ズズ
VMM
...THAT WILL ACTIVATE UPON OUR DEATH.
TAKE A GOOD LOOK...
ゴゴゴ
RRMMM
...WITH GYO.
ゴゴゴ
RMM
MMM

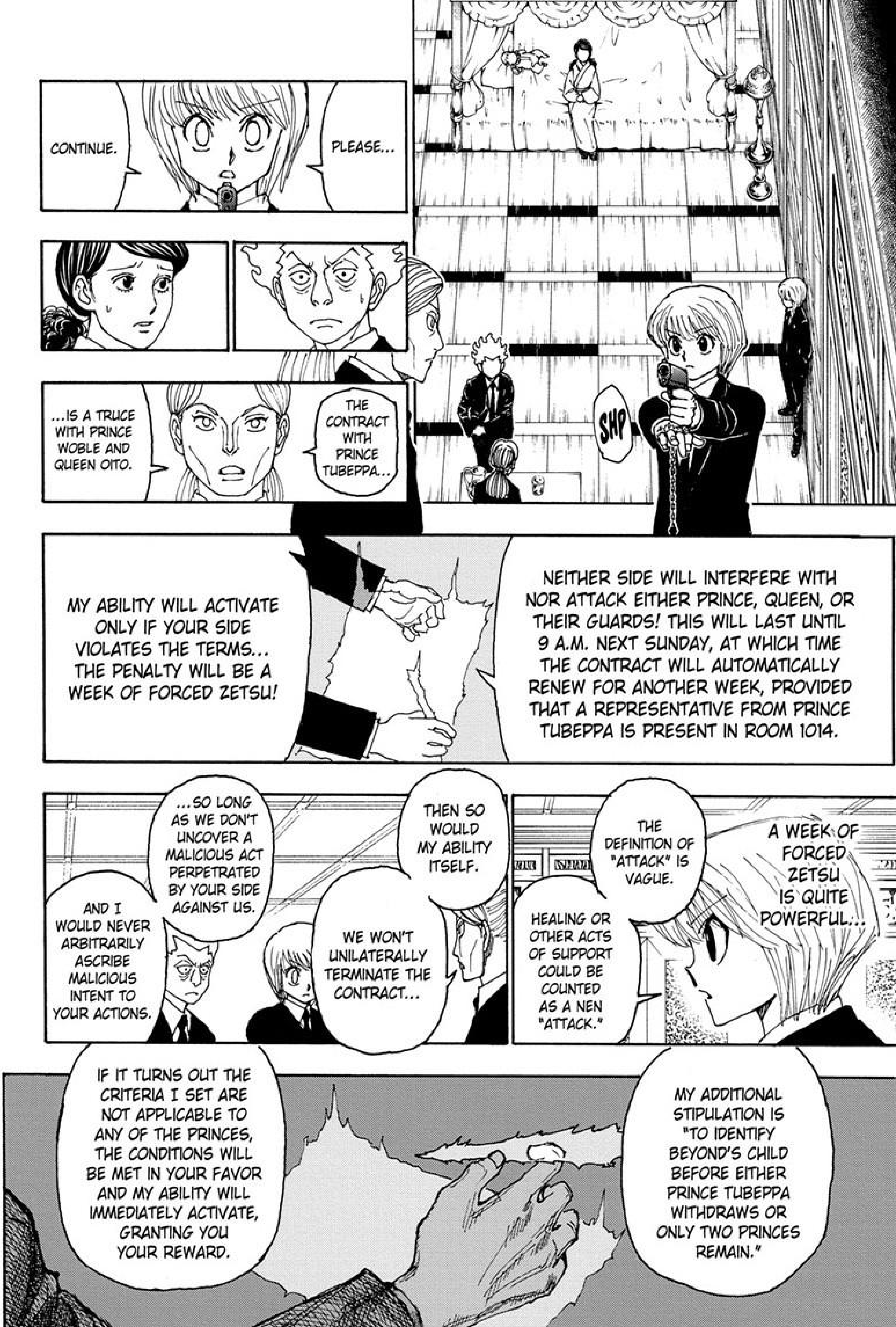

ゴゴゴゴゴゴ
RMMMMM
HE TOLD ME I WAS "A STRONG CURSE SACRIFICE."
I WAS CHOSEN TO CURSE MY TARGET TO DEATH! THERE ARE AT LEAST TEN OF US WHO ARE "STRONG," INCLUDING ME AND MAKAHA...
IF THERE ARE AS MANY OR MORE WEAK ONES WHO WEREN'T SELECTED...
...THEN MY FATHER MUST'VE PREPARED A LARGE NUMBER OF PAWNS BECAUSE HE COULDN'T BE SURE OF THE FINAL COUNT OF PRINCES.

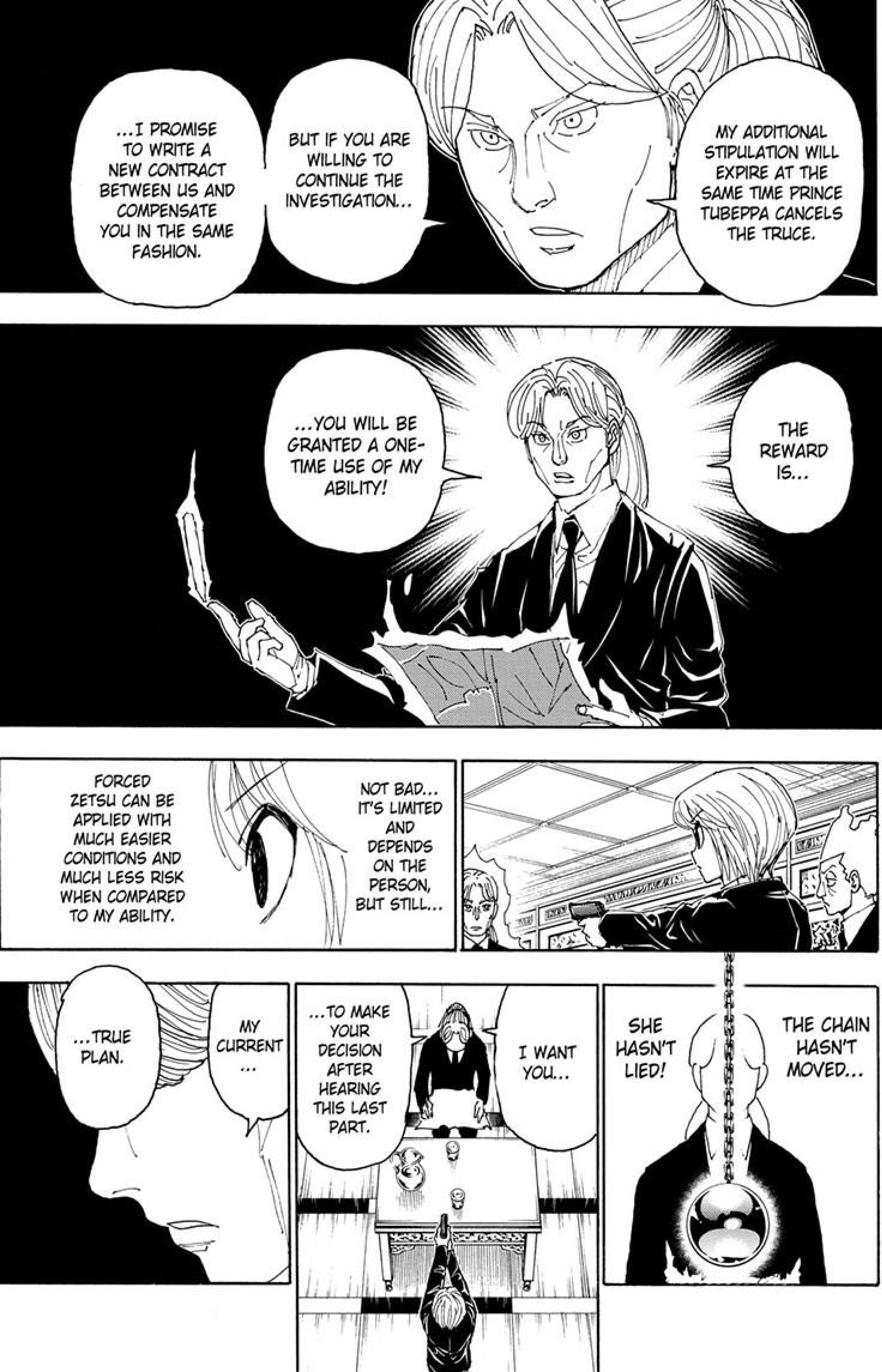

WE WERE ASSURED IT WASN'T SOMETHING THAT COULD BE REMOVED SIMPLY BY BURNING OFF THE SURFACE OR EVEN CUTTING IT OFF.
A POWERFUL CURSE, THE LIKES OF WHICH HE HAD NEVER SEEN...
OUR BODIES WERE TURNED INTO TOOLS OF BEYOND'S PLAN...
CURSE SACRIFICES INCARNATE, ON HIS BEHALF.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF ABILITY IT IS, OR WHO THE TARGETS ARE.
BUT THEY ARE UNDOUBTEDLY AIMED TO MAKE SURE OUR TARGETS ARE CURSED TO DEATH!
KURAPIKA.
IF THIS GOES ON FOR TOO LONG, PEOPLE WILL GET SUSPICIOUS.
...
BUT WE NEED TO HEAR ALL OF IT.
OR ELSE WE CAN'T FORM A CONTRACT WITH PRINCE TUBEPPA.
SINCE BEYOND DIDN'T MAKE ANY MOVES AFTER MAKAHA FAILED TO JOIN PRINCE CAMILLA'S ENTOURAGE...
...WE DON'T THINK OUR TARGETS ARE SIMPLY THE PRINCES WE WERE ASSIGNED TO.
THAT MEANS... WE MIGHT NOT HAVE NEEDED TO BE IN THE ENTOURAGE... OR EVEN IN THE MILITARY *AT ALL.*
EVEN OUR LIFE GOALS WERE USED FOR OUR FATHER'S SCHEME.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR TARGET IS...BUT YOU'RE SURE IT'S A PRINCE?
YES.
IT'S ONLY SPECULATION, BUT I'M SURE OF IT.

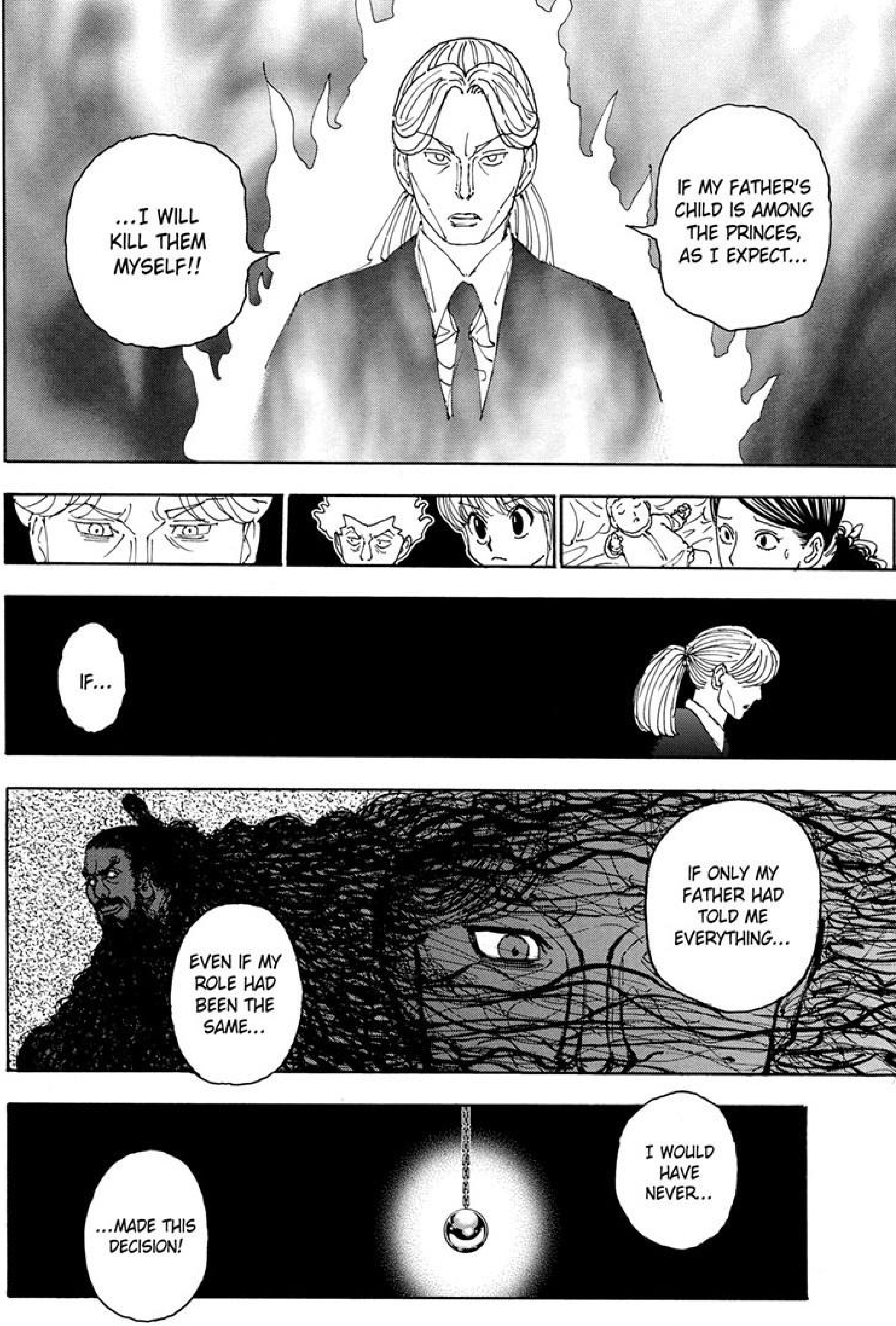

THERE ARE MORE THAN TEN STRONG CURSE SACRIFICES…AND 14 PRINCES.
IT CAN'T BE A COINCIDENCE.
WE DON'T KNOW WHO'S GOING TO KILL WHICH PRINCE.
BUT BEYOND IS TRYING TO INFLUENCE THE SUCCESSION BATTLE.
IF HE DIDN'T TELL THE SACRIFICES, THAT MEANS EITHER BEYOND KNOWS HOW TO ACTIVATE THE CURSE, OR HE'S LEAVING IT TO FATE AS A CONDITION THAT INCREASES ITS POWER.
PROBABLY THE LATTER… BEYOND IS IN KAKIN'S INNER-MOST CIRCLES… SO IT'S LIKELY HE JUST WANTS THE ELDEST, PRINCE BENJAMIN, TO TAKE THE THRONE.
SACRIFICING A LIFE IS NECESSARY FOR A POWERFUL CURSE! IF THEY GIVE PRINCE BENJAMIN SUCH A HINT IN ORDER TO ENSURE HE SURVIVES AS SUCCESSOR…
…THEN PRINCE BENJAMIN CAN USE HIS SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW, WITH THE MILITARY AT HIS BACK, AS A LAST RESORT.
NO.
I DON'T THINK IT'S PRINCE BENJAMIN.
?!
MY FATHER IS WELL PREPARED, CUNNING, AND GREEDY. AND WITH THIS MUCH PREPARATION TIME…
…IT'S *INCONCEIVABLE* THAT HE WOULD MAKE ALL THIS EFFORT FOR SOMEONE UNRELATED TO HIM.
THEN WHAT…
!
WAIT.
YOU MEAN …
YES.

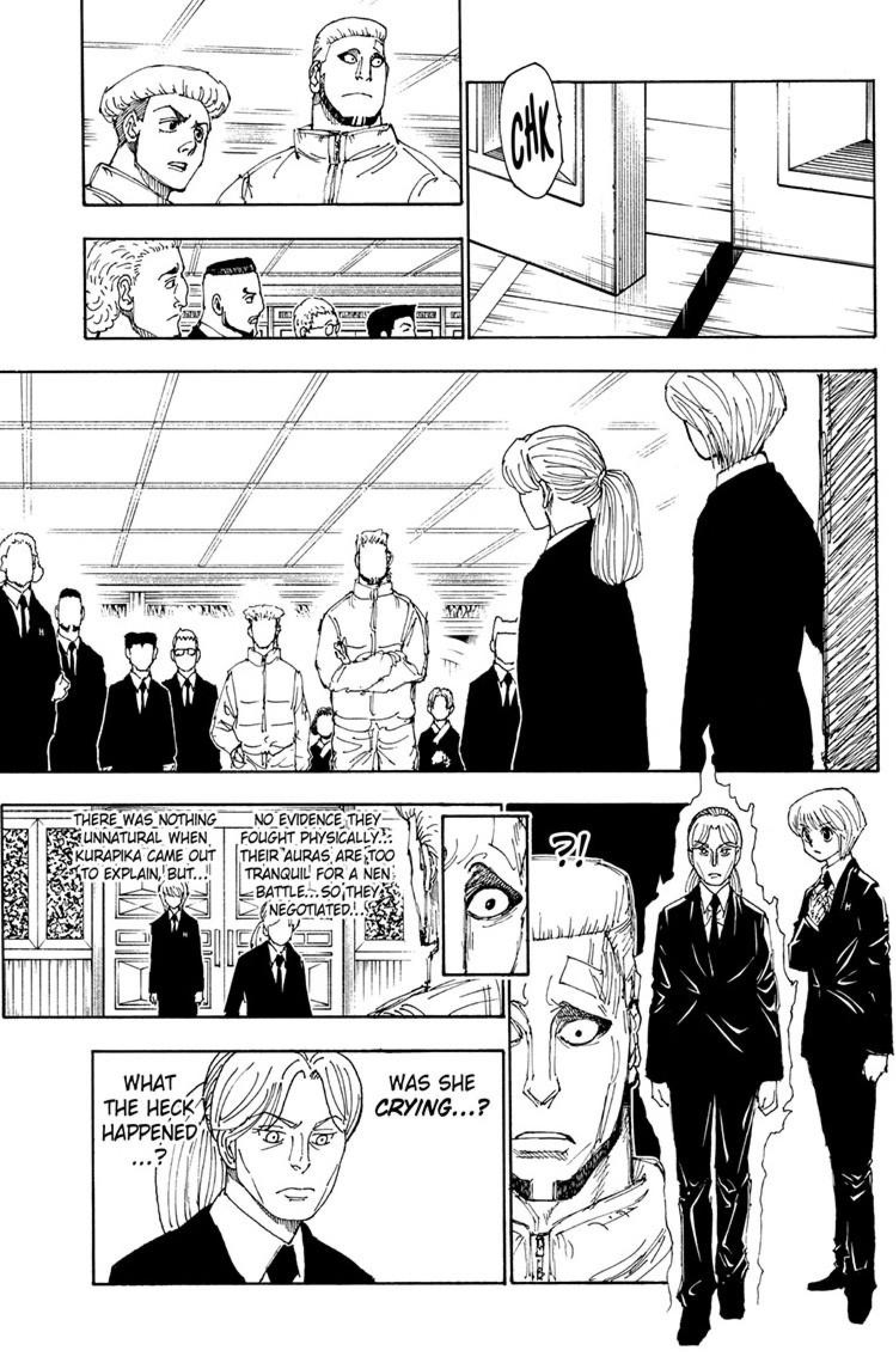

ONE OF THE PRINCES IS BEYOND'S CHILD!
THAT'S WHAT I THINK.
BUT...
IS THAT REALLY POSSIBLE?!
QUEEN OITO.
WHAT IS THE REQUIREMENT FOR A PRINCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SUCCESSION...?
TO BE QUALIFIED, THEY MUST BE BORN TO NASUBI HUI GUO ROU'S LAWFUL WIFE.
IT'S TRUE THAT THERE'S TECHNICALLY NO MENTION OF PATERNAL LINEAGE...
...BUT I MEAN... IT COULDN'T BE!

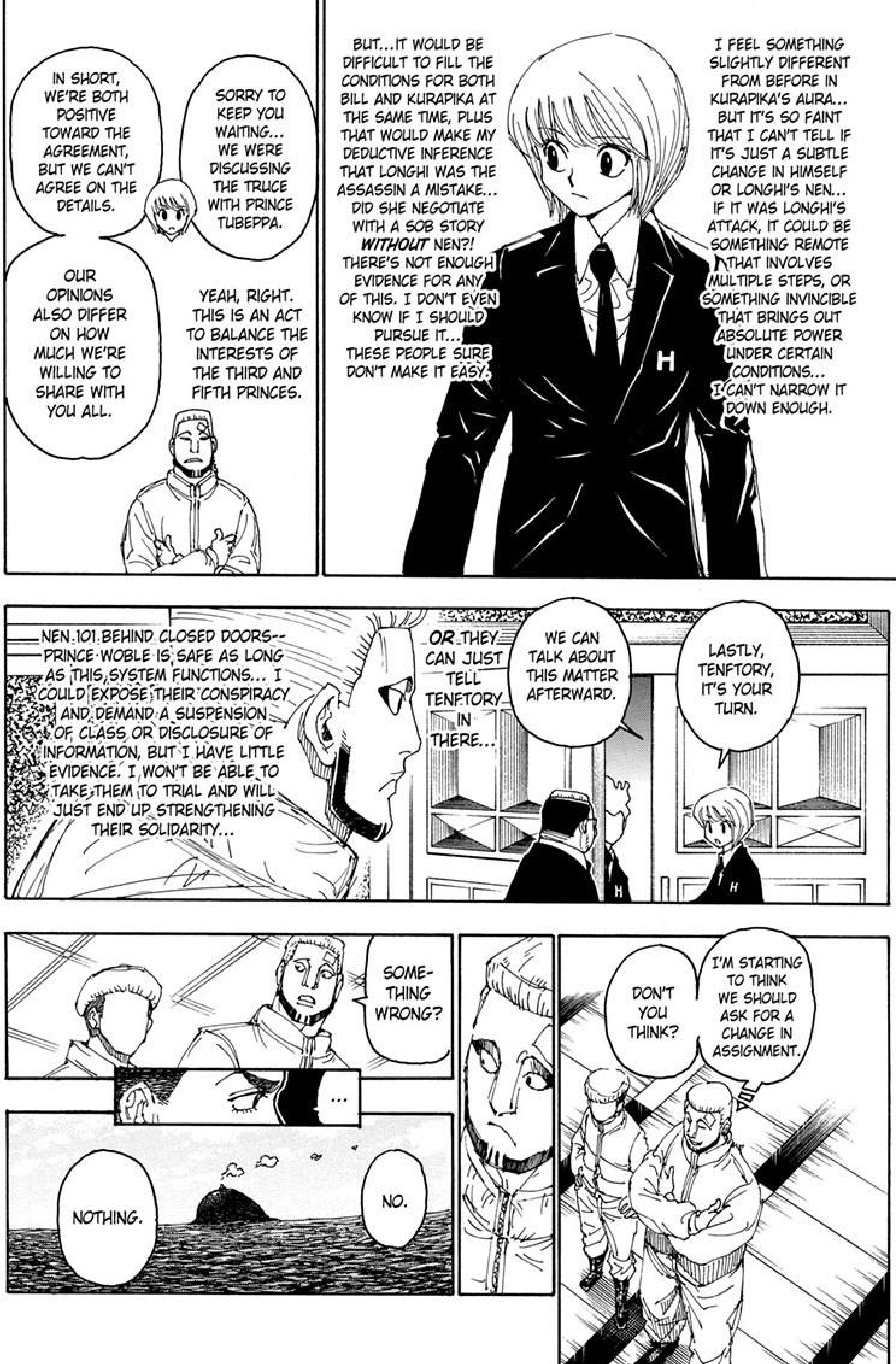

NOK コン
NOK コン
!!
KURAPIKA!! IS ANYTHING WRONG?
YOU'RE TAKING SO LONG THAT EVERYONE'S WORRIED!!
CHK ガチャ
WE'RE FINE.
NEGOTIATIONS ARE TAKING A WHILE BECAUSE WE CAN'T AGREE ON THE TERMS OF THE TRUCE.
WE'LL EXPLAIN IT FULLY AFTER-WARD...
...AND CLEAR UP ANY DOUBTS YOU MIGHT HAVE.
PLEASE HAVE PATIENCE.
HM.
THERE'S NO OUTRIGHT CHANGE IN KURAPIKA'S AURA, BUT...
...SURELY THEY'VE REALIZED SHE CAN USE NEN, AND SHE'S THE ASSASSIN! WHAT COULD THEY BE TALKING ABOUT?!
...

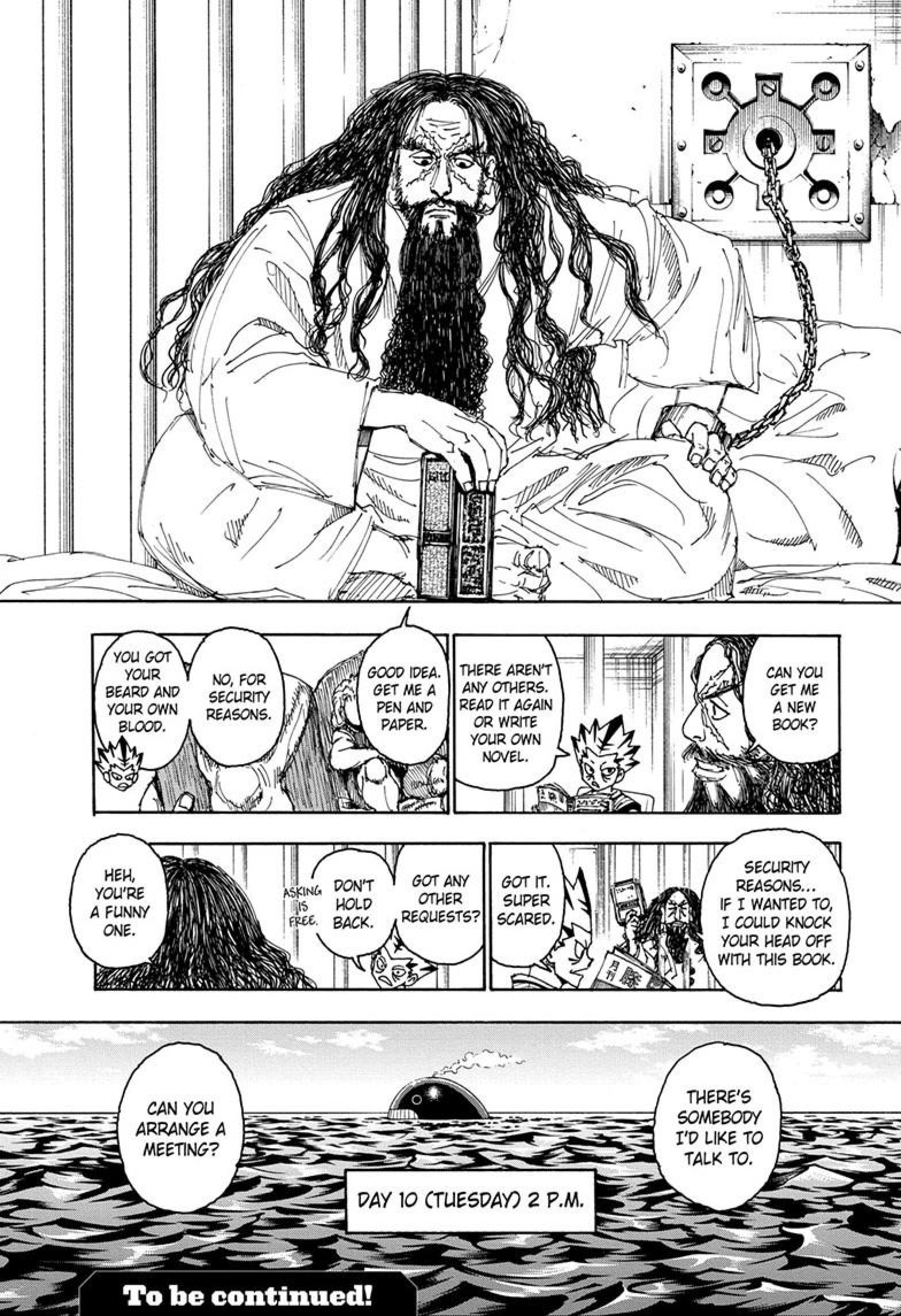

SHP
PLEASE...
CONTINUE.
THE CONTRACT WITH PRINCE TUBEPPA...
...IS A TRUCE WITH PRINCE WOBLE AND QUEEN OITO.
NEITHER SIDE WILL INTERFERE WITH NOR ATTACK EITHER PRINCE, QUEEN, OR THEIR GUARDS! THIS WILL LAST UNTIL 9 A.M. NEXT SUNDAY, AT WHICH TIME THE CONTRACT WILL AUTOMATICALLY RENEW FOR ANOTHER WEEK, PROVIDED THAT A REPRESENTATIVE FROM PRINCE TUBEPPA IS PRESENT IN ROOM 1014.
MY ABILITY WILL ACTIVATE ONLY IF YOUR SIDE VIOLATES THE TERMS... THE PENALTY WILL BE A WEEK OF FORCED ZETSU!
A WEEK OF FORCED ZETSU IS QUITE POWERFUL...
THE DEFINITION OF "ATTACK" IS VAGUE.
HEALING OR OTHER ACTS OF SUPPORT COULD BE COUNTED AS A NEN "ATTACK."
THEN SO WOULD MY ABILITY ITSELF.
WE WON'T UNILATERALLY TERMINATE THE CONTRACT...
...SO LONG AS WE DON'T UNCOVER A MALICIOUS ACT PERPETRATED BY YOUR SIDE AGAINST US.
AND I WOULD NEVER ARBITRARILY ASCRIBE MALICIOUS INTENT TO YOUR ACTIONS.
MY ADDITIONAL STIPULATION IS "TO IDENTIFY BEYOND'S CHILD BEFORE EITHER PRINCE TUBEPPA WITHDRAWS OR ONLY TWO PRINCES REMAIN."
IF IT TURNS OUT THE CRITERIA I SET ARE NOT APPLICABLE TO ANY OF THE PRINCES, THE CONDITIONS WILL BE MET IN YOUR FAVOR AND MY ABILITY WILL IMMEDIATELY ACTIVATE, GRANTING YOU YOUR REWARD.


MY ADDITIONAL STIPULATION WILL EXPIRE AT THE SAME TIME PRINCE TUBEPPA CANCELS THE TRUCE.
BUT IF YOU ARE WILLING TO CONTINUE THE INVESTIGATION...
...I PROMISE TO WRITE A NEW CONTRACT BETWEEN US AND COMPENSATE YOU IN THE SAME FASHION.
THE REWARD IS...
...YOU WILL BE GRANTED A ONE-TIME USE OF MY ABILITY!
NOT BAD... IT'S LIMITED AND DEPENDS ON THE PERSON, BUT STILL...
FORCED ZETSU CAN BE APPLIED WITH MUCH EASIER CONDITIONS AND MUCH LESS RISK WHEN COMPARED TO MY ABILITY.
THE CHAIN HASN'T MOVED...
SHE HASN'T LIED!
I WANT YOU...
...TO MAKE YOUR DECISION AFTER HEARING THIS LAST PART.
MY CURRENT...
...TRUE PLAN.


IF MY FATHER'S CHILD IS AMONG THE PRINCES, AS I EXPECT...
...I WILL KILL THEM MYSELF!!
IF...
IF ONLY MY FATHER HAD TOLD ME EVERYTHING...
EVEN IF MY ROLE HAD BEEN THE SAME...
I WOULD HAVE NEVER..
...MADE THIS DECISION!

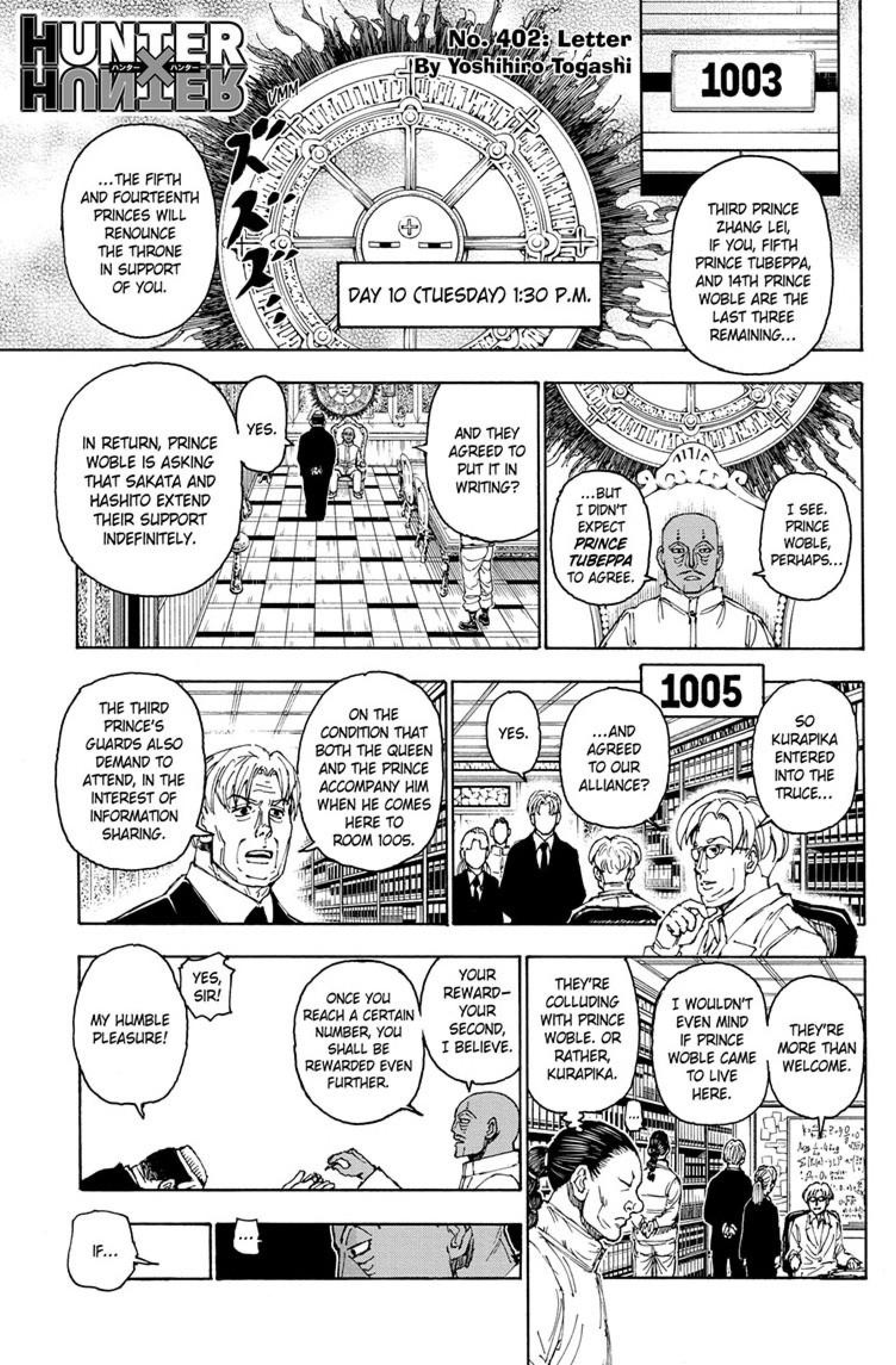

CHK
THERE WAS NOTHING UNNATURAL WHEN KURAPIKA CAME OUT TO EXPLAIN, BUT...
NO EVIDENCE THEY FOUGHT PHYSICALLY... THEIR AURAS ARE TOO TRANQUIL FOR A NEN BATTLE... SO THEY NEGOTIATED...
?!
WAS SHE *CRYING*...?
WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED ...?

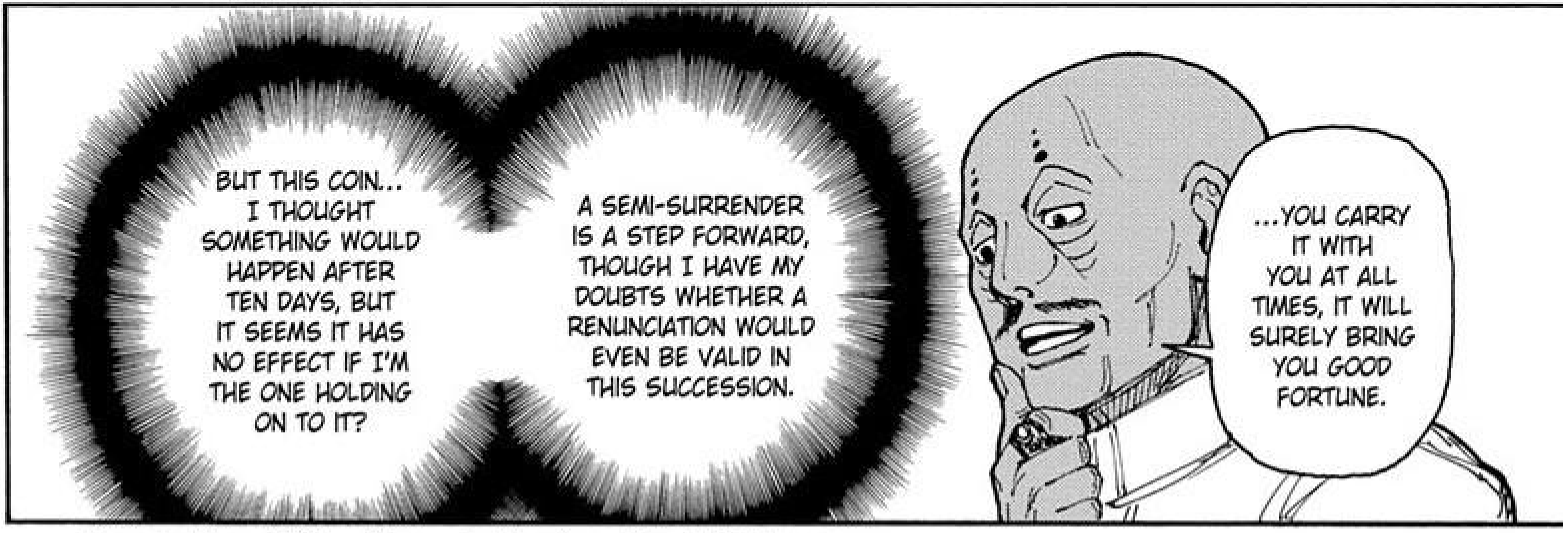

I FEEL SOMETHING SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE IN KURAPIKA'S AURA... BUT IT'S SO FAINT THAT I CAN'T TELL IF IT'S JUST A SUBTLE CHANGE IN HIMSELF OR LONGHI'S NEN... IF IT WAS LONGHI'S ATTACK, IT COULD BE SOMETHING REMOTE THAT INVOLVES MULTIPLE STEPS, OR SOMETHING INVINCIBLE THAT BRINGS OUT ABSOLUTE POWER UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS... I CAN'T NARROW IT DOWN ENOUGH.
BUT...IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO FILL THE CONDITIONS FOR BOTH BILL AND KURAPIKA AT THE SAME TIME, PLUS THAT WOULD MAKE MY DEDUCTIVE INFERENCE THAT LONGHI WAS THE ASSASSIN A MISTAKE... DID SHE NEGOTIATE WITH A SOB STORY *WITHOUT* NEN?! THERE'S NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE FOR ANY OF THIS. I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I SHOULD PURSUE IT... THESE PEOPLE SURE DON'T MAKE IT EASY.
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING... WE WERE DISCUSSING THE TRUCE WITH PRINCE TUBEPPA.
IN SHORT, WE'RE BOTH POSITIVE TOWARD THE AGREEMENT, BUT WE CAN'T AGREE ON THE DETAILS.
OUR OPINIONS ALSO DIFFER ON HOW MUCH WE'RE WILLING TO SHARE WITH YOU ALL.
YEAH, RIGHT. THIS IS AN ACT TO BALANCE THE INTERESTS OF THE THIRD AND FIFTH PRINCES.
LASTLY, TENFTORY, IT'S YOUR TURN.
WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS MATTER AFTERWARD.
OR THEY CAN JUST TELL TENFTORY IN THERE...
NEN 101 BEHIND CLOSED DOORS-- PRINCE WOBLE IS SAFE AS LONG AS THIS SYSTEM FUNCTIONS... I COULD EXPOSE THEIR CONSPIRACY AND DEMAND A SUSPENSION OF CLASS OR DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION, BUT I HAVE LITTLE EVIDENCE. I WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE THEM TO TRIAL AND WILL JUST END UP STRENGTHENING THEIR SOLIDARITY...
I'M STARTING TO THINK WE SHOULD ASK FOR A CHANGE IN ASSIGNMENT.
DON'T YOU THINK?
SOME-THING WRONG?
...
NO.
NOTHING.


CAN YOU GET ME A NEW BOOK?
THERE AREN'T ANY OTHERS. READ IT AGAIN OR WRITE YOUR OWN NOVEL.
GOOD IDEA. GET ME A PEN AND PAPER.
NO, FOR SECURITY REASONS.
YOU GOT YOUR BEARD AND YOUR OWN BLOOD.
SECURITY REASONS… IF I WANTED TO, I COULD KNOCK YOUR HEAD OFF WITH THIS BOOK.
GOT IT. SUPER SCARED.
GOT ANY OTHER REQUESTS?
DON'T HOLD BACK.
ASKING IS FREE.
HEH, YOU'RE A FUNNY ONE.
THERE'S SOMEBODY I'D LIKE TO TALK TO.
CAN YOU ARRANGE A MEETING?
DAY 10 (TUESDAY) 2 P.M.
To be continued!

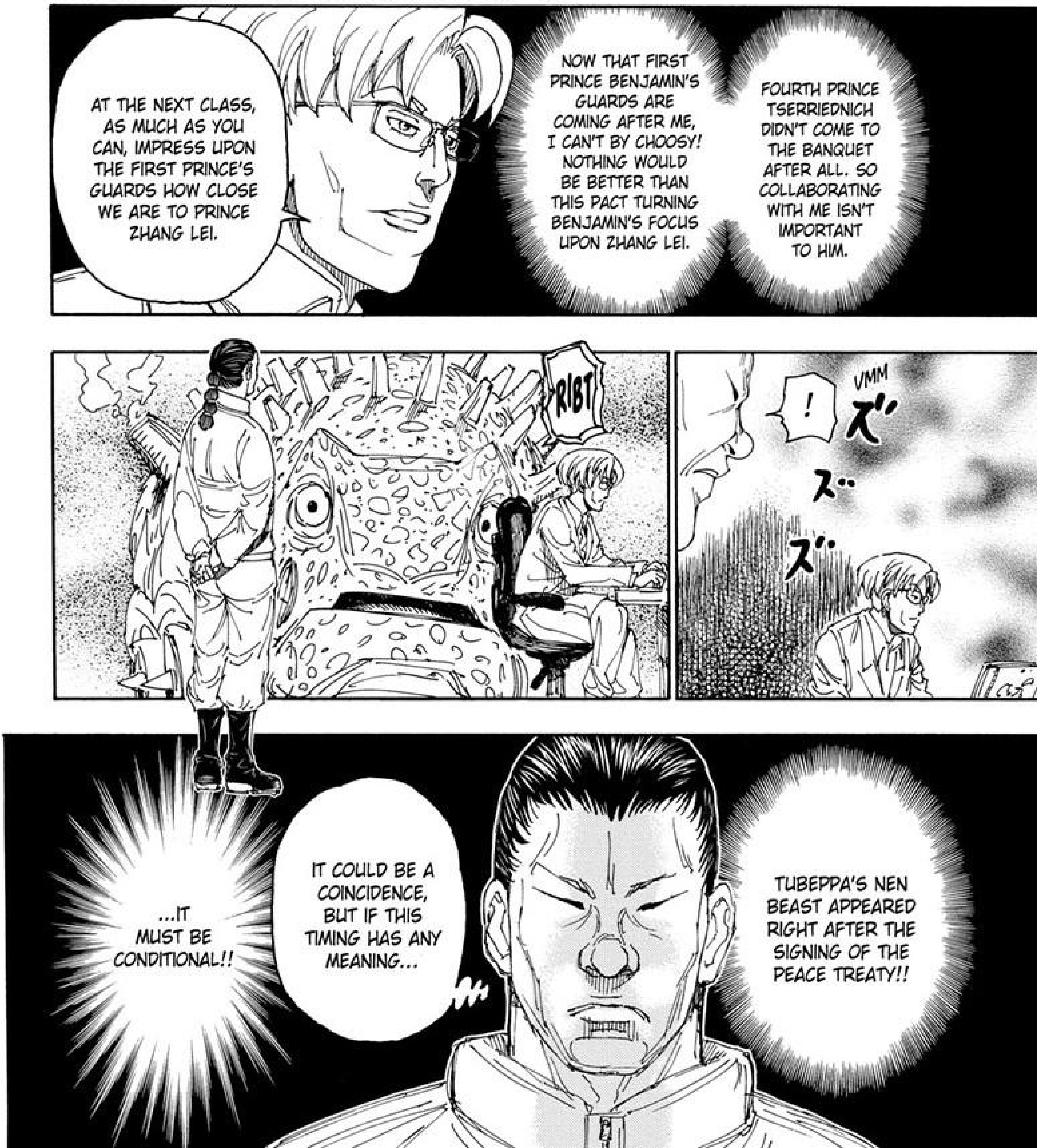
No. 402: Letter

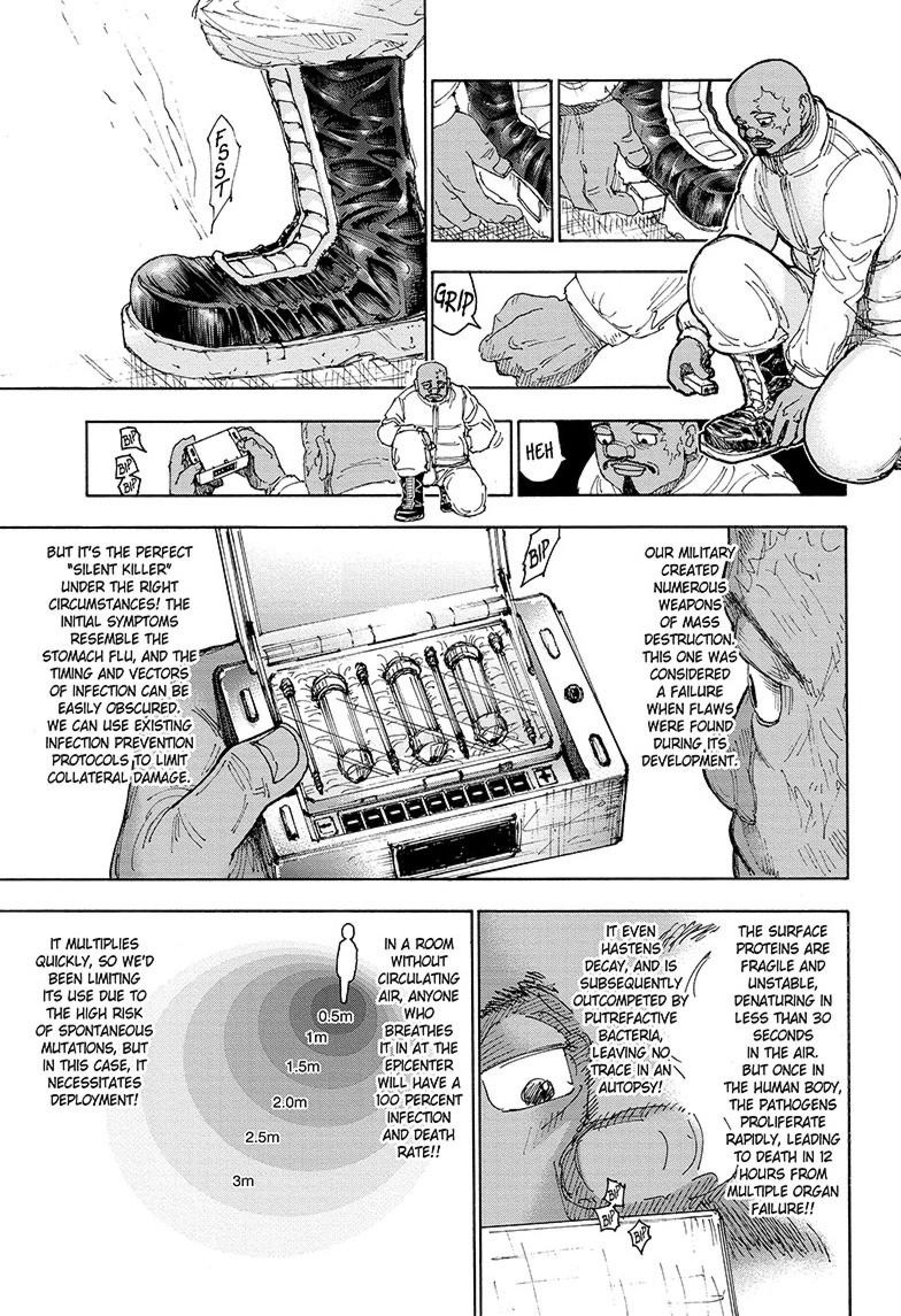
By Yoshihiro Togashi

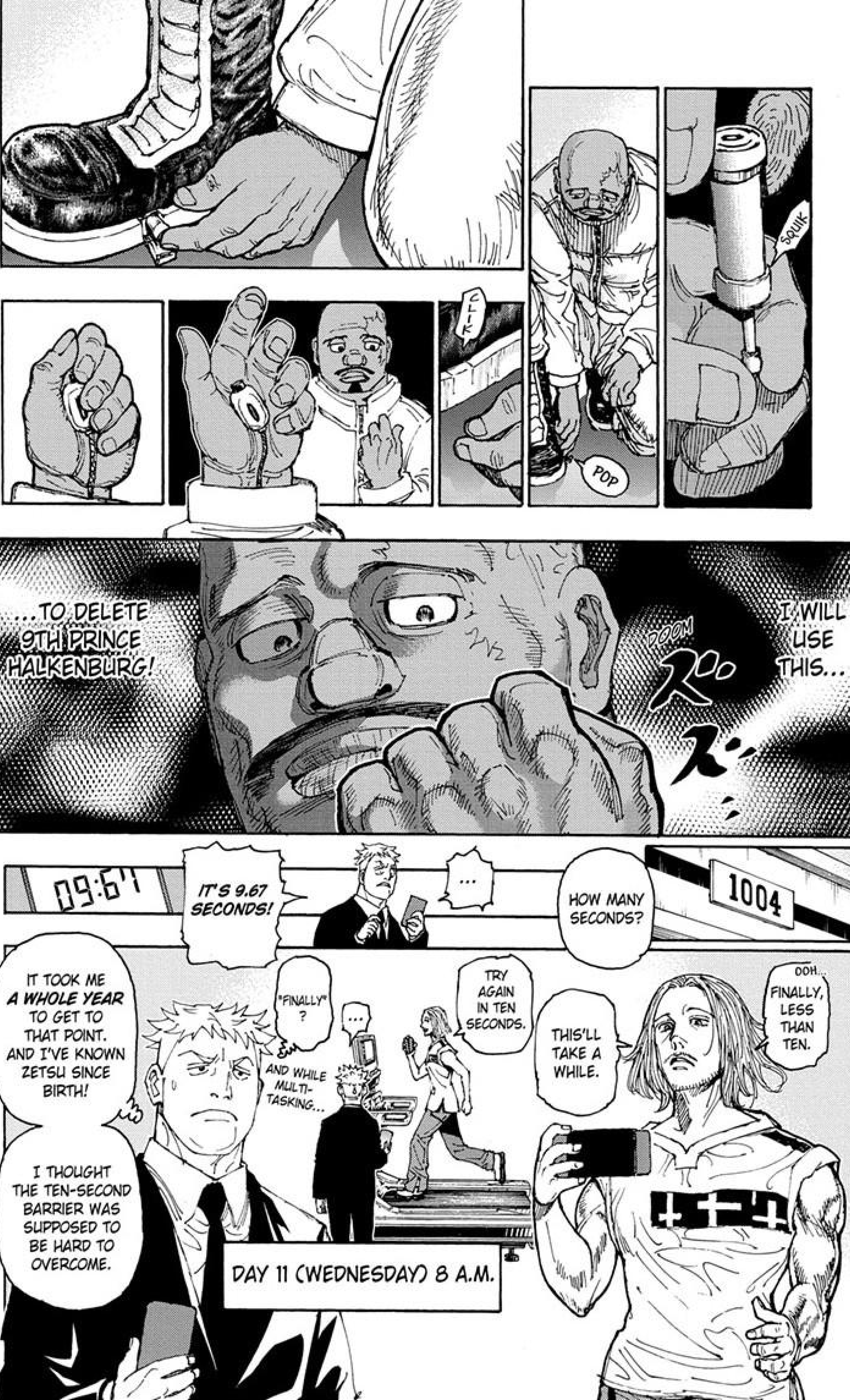

1003
THIRD PRINCE ZHANG LEI, IF YOU, FIFTH PRINCE TUBEPPA, AND 14TH PRINCE WOBLE ARE THE LAST THREE REMAINING...
DAY 10 (TUESDAY) 1:30 P.M.
UMM
...THE FIFTH AND FOURTEENTH PRINCES WILL RENOUNCE THE THRONE IN SUPPORT OF YOU.
I SEE. PRINCE WOBLE, PERHAPS...
...BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT *PRINCE TUBEPPA* TO AGREE.
AND THEY AGREED TO PUT IT IN WRITING?
YES.
IN RETURN, PRINCE WOBLE IS ASKING THAT SAKATA AND HASHITO EXTEND THEIR SUPPORT INDEFINITELY.
1005
SO KURAPIKA ENTERED INTO THE TRUCE...
...AND AGREED TO OUR ALLIANCE?
YES.
ON THE CONDITION THAT BOTH THE QUEEN AND THE PRINCE ACCOMPANY HIM WHEN HE COMES HERE TO ROOM 1005.
THE THIRD PRINCE'S GUARDS ALSO DEMAND TO ATTEND, IN THE INTEREST OF INFORMATION SHARING.
THEY'RE MORE THAN WELCOME.
I WOULDN'T EVEN MIND IF PRINCE WOBLE CAME TO LIVE HERE.
THEY'RE COLLUDING WITH PRINCE WOBLE. OR RATHER, KURAPIKA.
...
YOUR REWARD— YOUR SECOND, I BELIEVE.
ONCE YOU REACH A CERTAIN NUMBER, YOU SHALL BE REWARDED EVEN FURTHER.
YES, SIR!
MY HUMBLE PLEASURE!
...
IF...

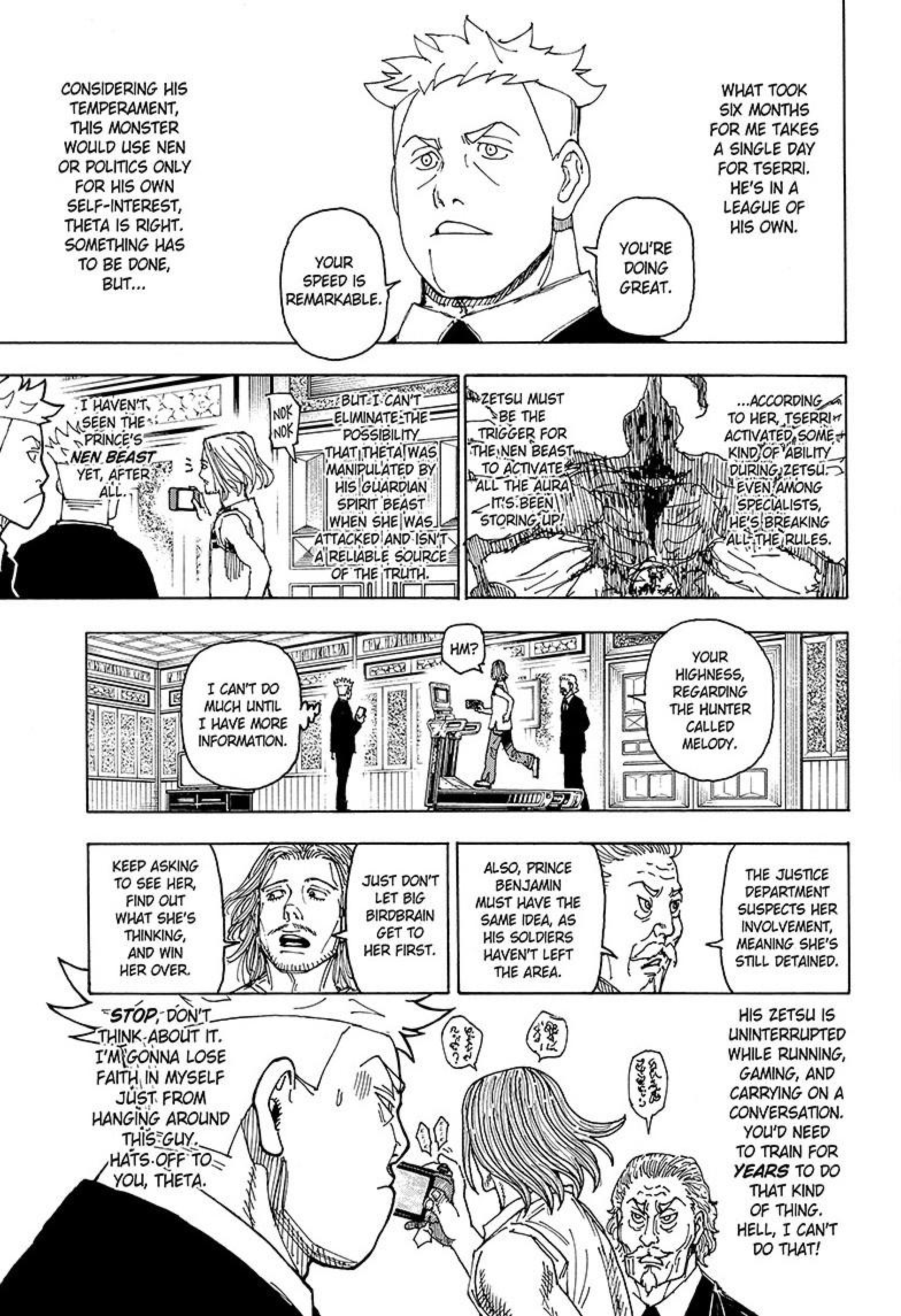

...YOU CARRY IT WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES, IT WILL SURELY BRING YOU GOOD FORTUNE.
A SEMI-SURRENDER IS A STEP FORWARD, THOUGH I HAVE MY DOUBTS WHETHER A RENUNCIATION WOULD EVEN BE VALID IN THIS SUCCESSION.
BUT THIS COIN... I THOUGHT SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN AFTER TEN DAYS, BUT IT SEEMS IT HAS NO EFFECT IF I'M THE ONE HOLDING ON TO IT?

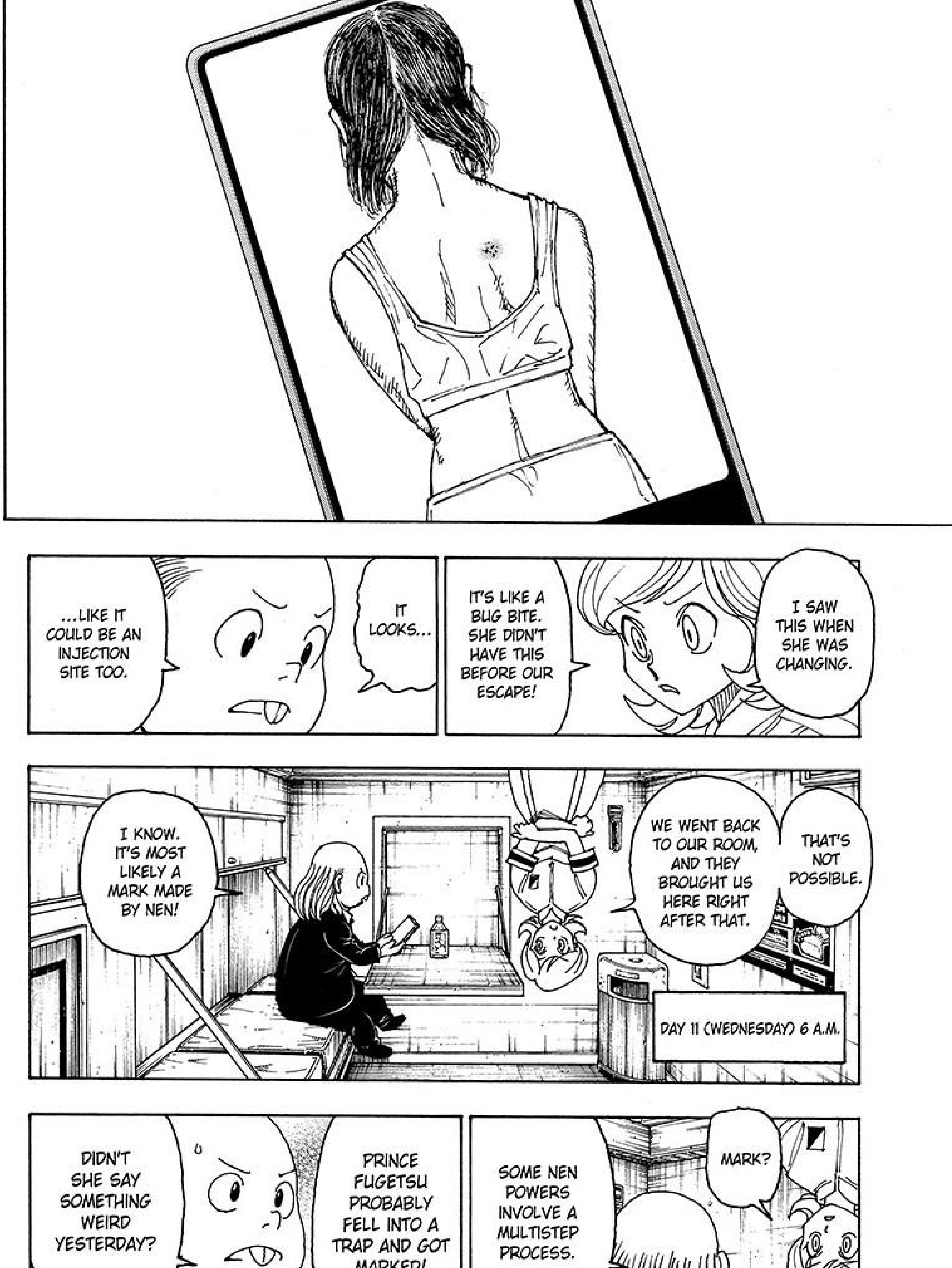
Translation: Lillian Olsen, Lettering: Mark McMurray

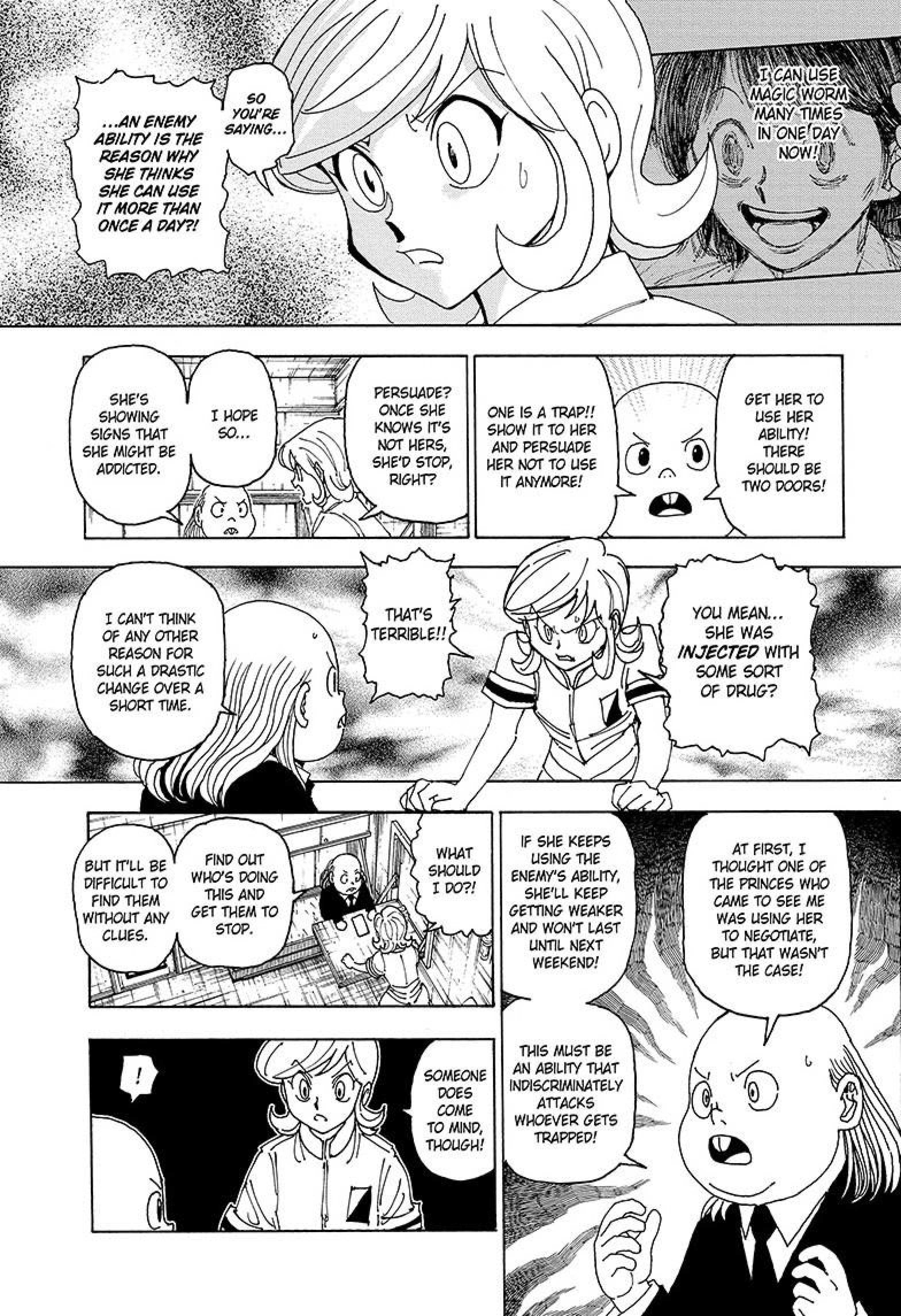

FOURTH PRINCE TSERRIEDNICH DIDN'T COME TO THE BANQUET AFTER ALL. SO COLLABORATING WITH ME ISN'T IMPORTANT TO HIM.
NOW THAT FIRST PRINCE BENJAMIN'S GUARDS ARE COMING AFTER ME, I CAN'T BY CHOOSY! NOTHING WOULD BE BETTER THAN THIS PACT TURNING BENJAMIN'S FOCUS UPON ZHANG LEI.
AT THE NEXT CLASS, AS MUCH AS YOU CAN, IMPRESS UPON THE FIRST PRINCE'S GUARDS HOW CLOSE WE ARE TO PRINCE ZHANG LEI.
!
VMM
ズ
ズ
ズ
RIBT
TUBEPPA'S NEN BEAST APPEARED RIGHT AFTER THE SIGNING OF THE PEACE TREATY!!
IT COULD BE A COINCIDENCE, BUT IF THIS TIMING HAS ANY MEANING...
...IT MUST BE CONDITIONAL!!

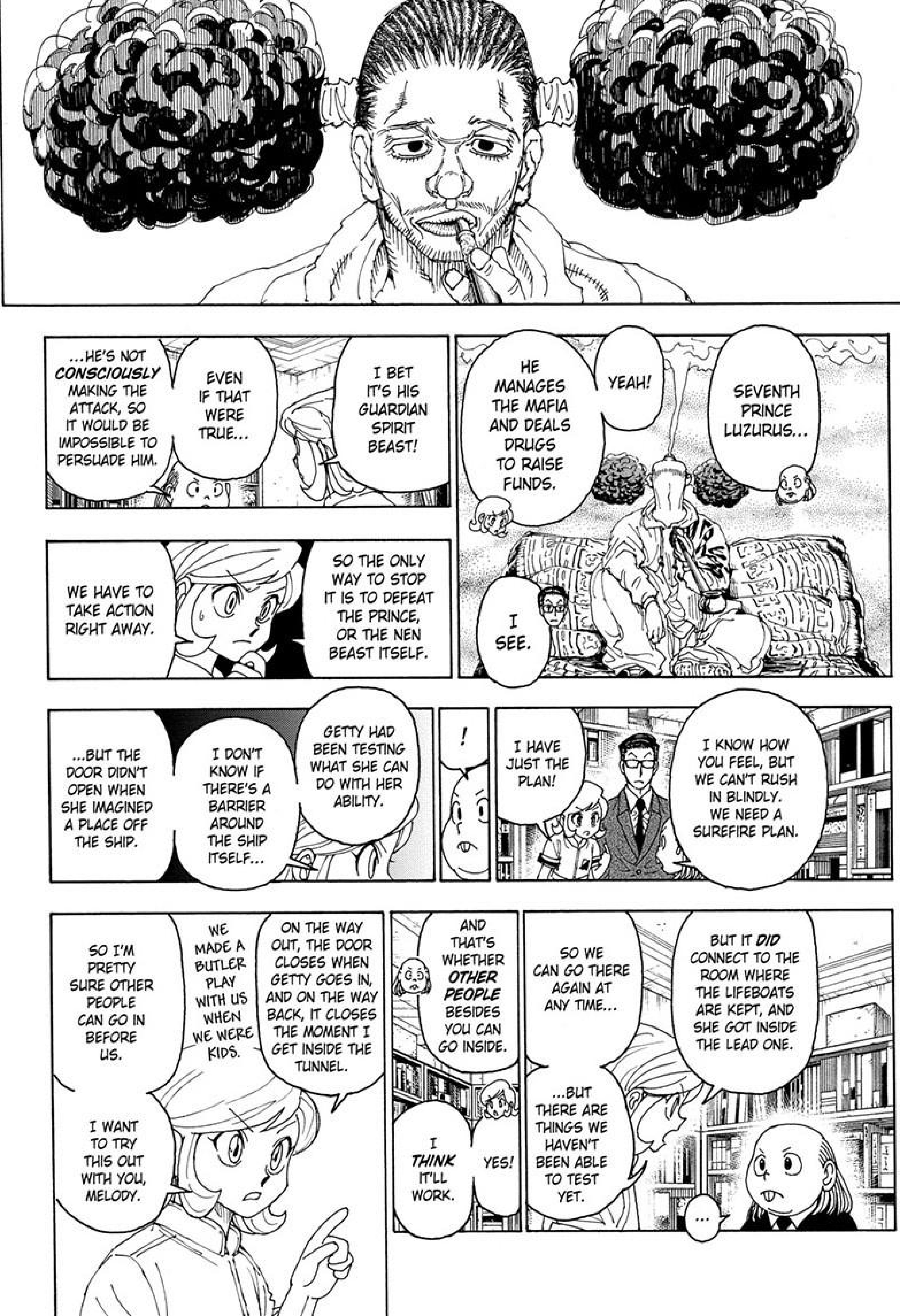

FSST
GRIP
HEH
BIP
BIP
BIP
OUR MILITARY CREATED NUMEROUS WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. THIS ONE WAS CONSIDERED A FAILURE WHEN FLAWS WERE FOUND DURING ITS DEVELOPMENT.
BIP
BUT IT'S THE PERFECT "SILENT KILLER" UNDER THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES! THE INITIAL SYMPTOMS RESEMBLE THE STOMACH FLU, AND THE TIMING AND VECTORS OF INFECTION CAN BE EASILY OBSCURED. WE CAN USE EXISTING INFECTION PREVENTION PROTOCOLS TO LIMIT COLLATERAL DAMAGE.
THE SURFACE PROTEINS ARE FRAGILE AND UNSTABLE, DENATURING IN LESS THAN 30 SECONDS IN THE AIR. BUT ONCE IN THE HUMAN BODY, THE PATHOGENS PROLIFERATE RAPIDLY, LEADING TO DEATH IN 12 HOURS FROM MULTIPLE ORGAN FAILURE!!
IT EVEN HASTENS DECAY, AND IS SUBSEQUENTLY OUTCOMPETED BY PUTREFACTIVE BACTERIA, LEAVING NO TRACE IN AN AUTOPSY!
BIP
BIP
BIP
IN A ROOM WITHOUT CIRCULATING AIR, ANYONE WHO BREATHES IT IN AT THE EPICENTER WILL HAVE A 100 PERCENT INFECTION AND DEATH RATE!!
0.5m
1m
1.5m
2.0m
2.5m
3m
IT MULTIPLIES QUICKLY, SO WE'D BEEN LIMITING ITS USE DUE TO THE HIGH RISK OF SPONTANEOUS MUTATIONS, BUT IN THIS CASE, IT NECESSITATES DEPLOYMENT!

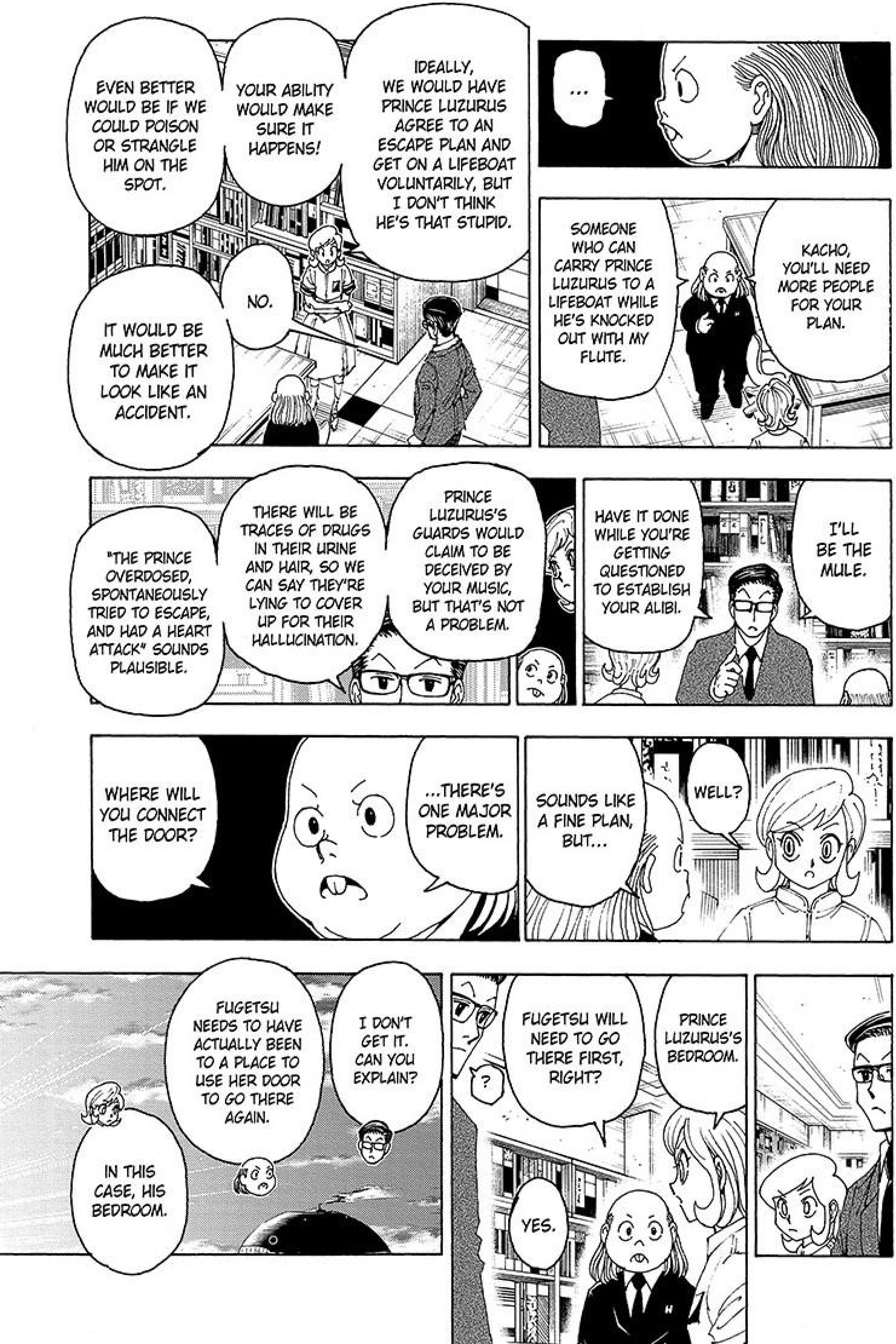

SQUIK
CLIK
POP
I WILL USE THIS...
DOON ズズ
...TO DELETE 9TH PRINCE HALKENBURG!
1004
HOW MANY SECONDS?
...
IT'S 9.67 SECONDS!
09:67
OOH... FINALLY, LESS THAN TEN.
THIS'LL TAKE A WHILE.
TRY AGAIN IN TEN SECONDS.
...
"FINALLY"?
AND WHILE MULTI-TASKING...
IT TOOK ME A WHOLE YEAR TO GET TO THAT POINT. AND I'VE KNOWN ZETSU SINCE BIRTH!
I THOUGHT THE TEN-SECOND BARRIER WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HARD TO OVERCOME.
DAY 11 (WEDNESDAY) 8 A.M.

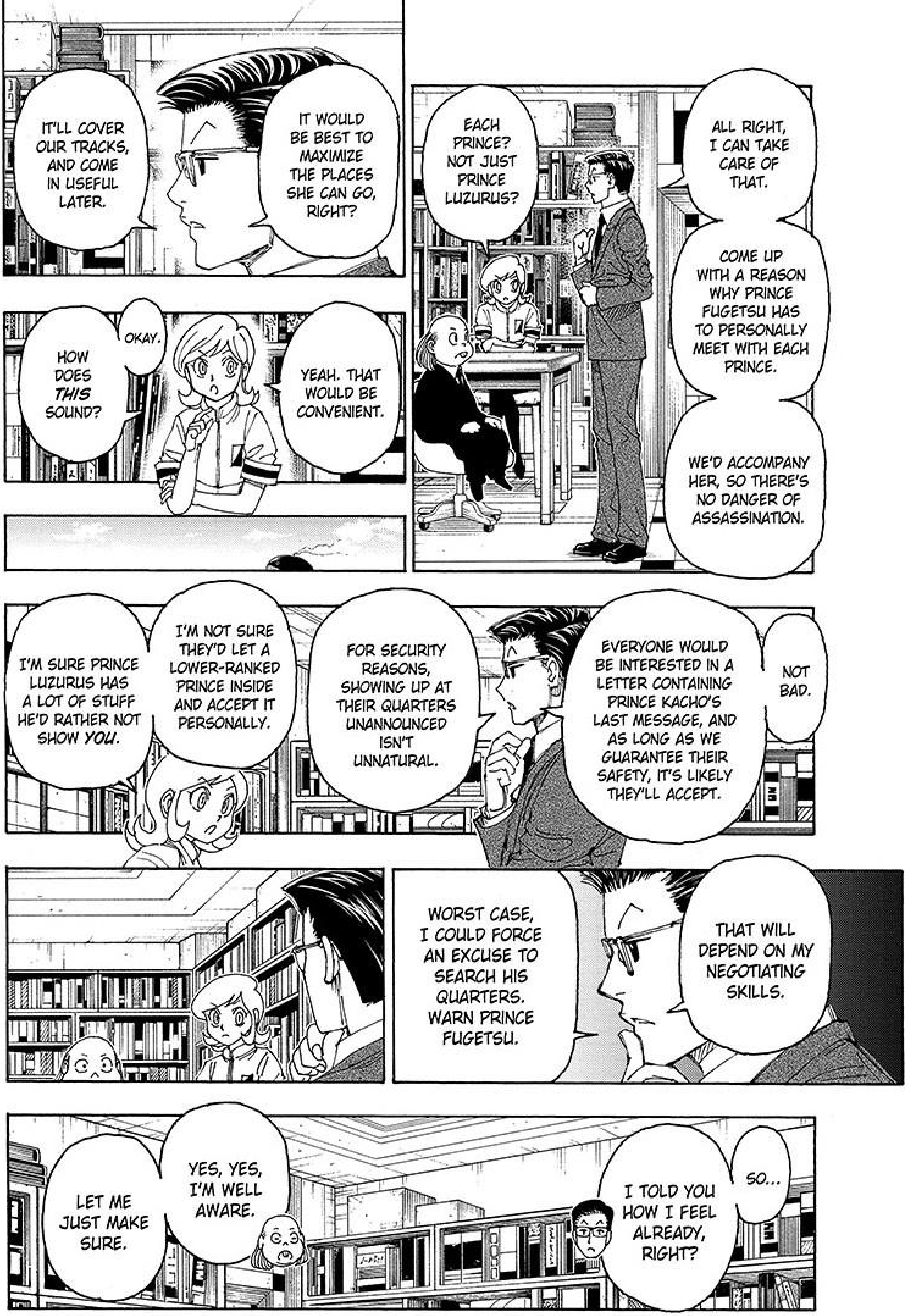

WHAT TOOK SIX MONTHS FOR ME TAKES A SINGLE DAY FOR TSERRI. HE'S IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN.
YOU'RE DOING GREAT.
YOUR SPEED IS REMARKABLE.
CONSIDERING HIS TEMPERAMENT, THIS MONSTER WOULD USE NEN OR POLITICS ONLY FOR HIS OWN SELF-INTEREST, THETA IS RIGHT. SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE, BUT...
...ACCORDING TO HER, TSERRI ACTIVATED SOME KIND OF ABILITY DURING ZETSU. EVEN AMONG SPECIALISTS, HE'S BREAKING ALL THE RULES.
ZETSU MUST BE THE TRIGGER FOR THE NEN BEAST TO ACTIVATE ALL THE AURA IT'S BEEN STORING UP!
BUT I CAN'T ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THETA WAS MANIPULATED BY HIS GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST WHEN SHE WAS ATTACKED AND ISN'T A RELIABLE SOURCE OF THE TRUTH.
NOK NOK
I HAVEN'T SEEN THE PRINCE'S *NEN BEAST* YET, AFTER ALL.
YOUR HIGHNESS, REGARDING THE HUNTER CALLED MELODY.
HM?
I CAN'T DO MUCH UNTIL I HAVE MORE INFORMATION.
THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SUSPECTS HER INVOLVEMENT, MEANING SHE'S STILL DETAINED.
ALSO, PRINCE BENJAMIN MUST HAVE THE SAME IDEA, AS HIS SOLDIERS HAVEN'T LEFT THE AREA.
JUST DON'T LET BIG BIRDBRAIN GET TO HER FIRST.
KEEP ASKING TO SEE HER, FIND OUT WHAT SHE'S THINKING, AND WIN HER OVER.
HIS ZETSU IS UNINTERRUPTED WHILE RUNNING, GAMING, AND CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION. YOU'D NEED TO TRAIN FOR *YEARS* TO DO THAT KIND OF THING. HELL, I CAN'T DO THAT!
STOP, DON'T THINK ABOUT IT. I'M GONNA LOSE FAITH IN MYSELF JUST FROM HANGING AROUND THIS GUY. HATS OFF TO YOU, THETA.

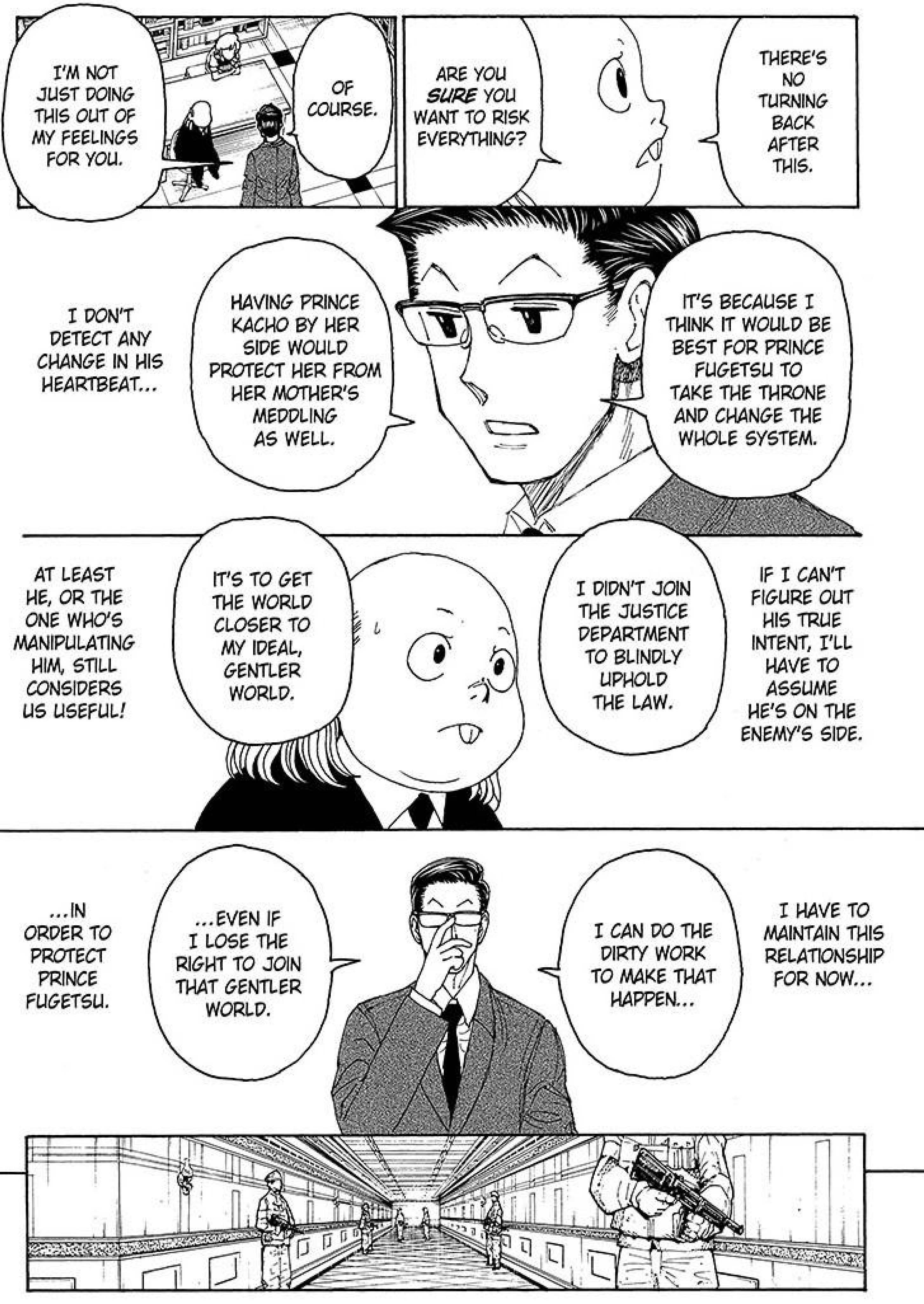

I SAW THIS WHEN SHE WAS CHANGING.
IT'S LIKE A BUG BITE. SHE DIDN'T HAVE THIS BEFORE OUR ESCAPE!
IT LOOKS...
...LIKE IT COULD BE AN INJECTION SITE TOO.
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.
WE WENT BACK TO OUR ROOM, AND THEY BROUGHT US HERE RIGHT AFTER THAT.
I KNOW. IT'S MOST LIKELY A MARK MADE BY NEN!
DAY 11 (WEDNESDAY) 6 A.M.
MARK?
SOME NEN POWERS INVOLVE A MULTISTEP PROCESS.
PRINCE FUGETSU PROBABLY FELL INTO A TRAP AND GOT MARKED!
DIDN'T SHE SAY SOMETHING WEIRD YESTERDAY?

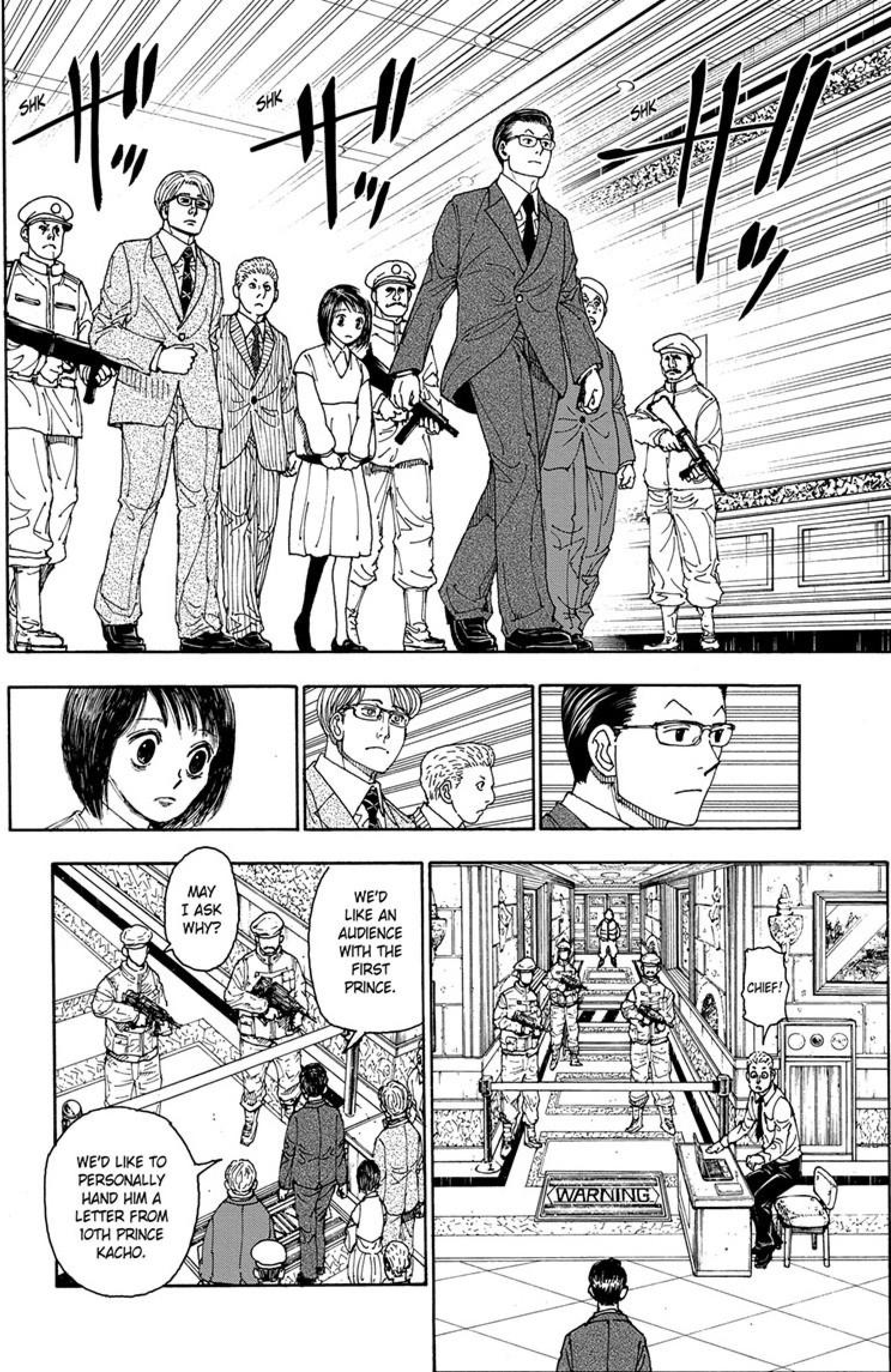

I CAN USE MAGIC WORM MANY TIMES IN ONE DAY NOW!!
SO YOU'RE SAYING...
...AN ENEMY ABILITY IS THE REASON WHY SHE THINKS SHE CAN USE IT MORE THAN ONCE A DAY?!
GET HER TO USE HER ABILITY! THERE SHOULD BE TWO DOORS!
ONE IS A TRAP!! SHOW IT TO HER AND PERSUADE HER NOT TO USE IT ANYMORE!
PERSUADE? ONCE SHE KNOWS IT'S NOT HERS, SHE'D STOP, RIGHT?
I HOPE SO...
SHE'S SHOWING SIGNS THAT SHE MIGHT BE ADDICTED.
YOU MEAN... SHE WAS *INJECTED* WITH SOME SORT OF DRUG?
THAT'S TERRIBLE!!
I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER REASON FOR SUCH A DRASTIC CHANGE OVER A SHORT TIME.
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT ONE OF THE PRINCES WHO CAME TO SEE ME WAS USING HER TO NEGOTIATE, BUT THAT WASN'T THE CASE!
IF SHE KEEPS USING THE ENEMY'S ABILITY, SHE'LL KEEP GETTING WEAKER AND WON'T LAST UNTIL NEXT WEEKEND!
THIS MUST BE AN ABILITY THAT INDISCRIMINATELY ATTACKS WHOEVER GETS TRAPPED!
WHAT SHOULD I DO?!
FIND OUT WHO'S DOING THIS AND GET THEM TO STOP.
BUT IT'LL BE DIFFICULT TO FIND THEM WITHOUT ANY CLUES.
!
SOMEONE DOES COME TO MIND, THOUGH!

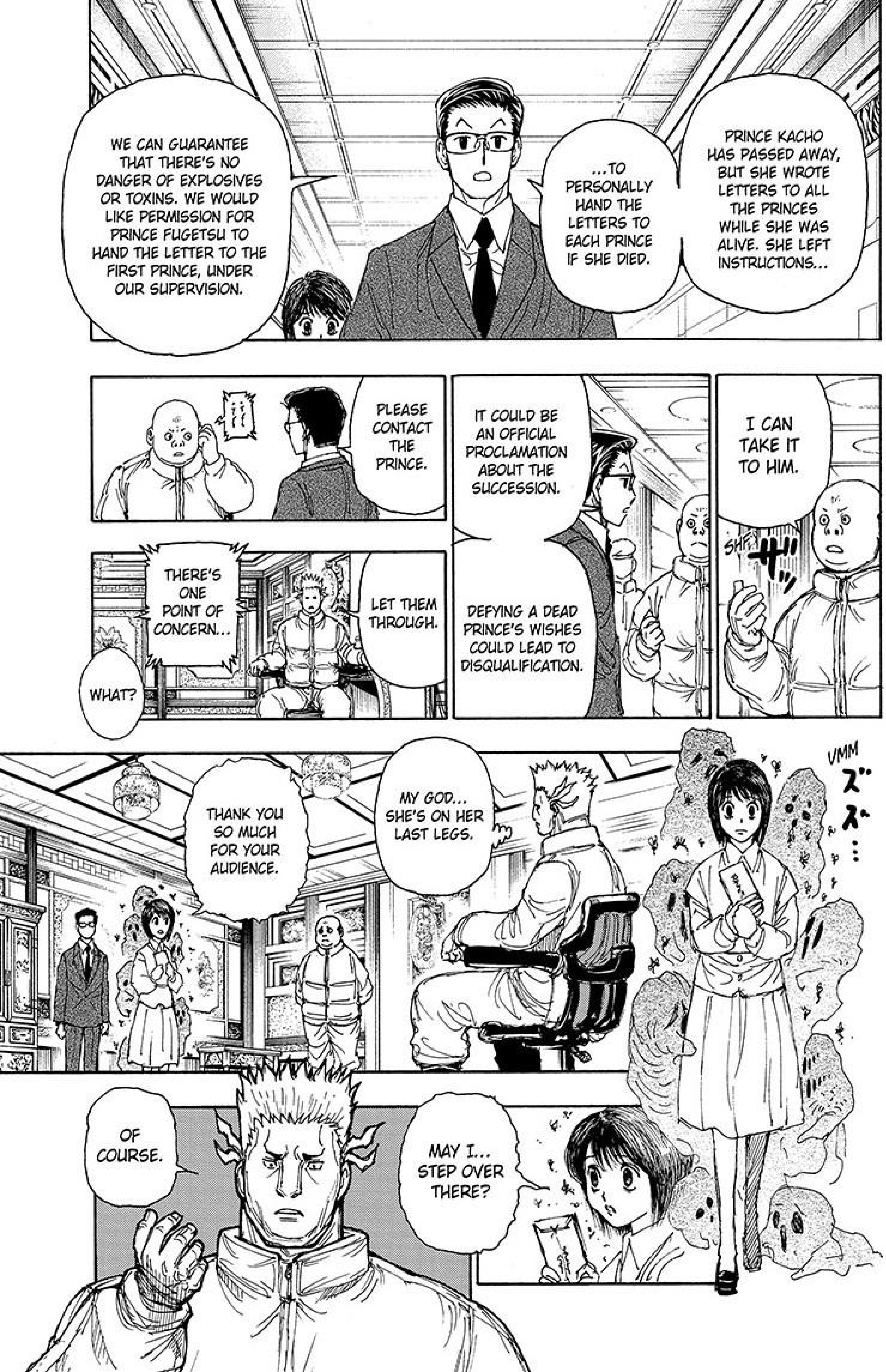

SEVENTH PRINCE LUZURUS...
YEAH!
HE MANAGES THE MAFIA AND DEALS DRUGS TO RAISE FUNDS.
I SEE.
I BET IT'S HIS GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST!
EVEN IF THAT WERE TRUE...
...HE'S NOT *CONSCIOUSLY* MAKING THE ATTACK, SO IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PERSUADE HIM.
SO THE ONLY WAY TO STOP IT IS TO DEFEAT THE PRINCE, OR THE NEN BEAST ITSELF.
WE HAVE TO TAKE ACTION RIGHT AWAY.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, BUT WE CAN'T RUSH IN BLINDLY. WE NEED A SUREFIRE PLAN.
I HAVE JUST THE PLAN!
!
GETTY HAD BEEN TESTING WHAT SHE CAN DO WITH HER ABILITY.
I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S A BARRIER AROUND THE SHIP ITSELF...
...BUT THE DOOR DIDN'T OPEN WHEN SHE IMAGINED A PLACE OFF THE SHIP.
BUT IT *DID* CONNECT TO THE ROOM WHERE THE LIFEBOATS ARE KEPT, AND SHE GOT INSIDE THE LEAD ONE.
SO WE CAN GO THERE AGAIN AT ANY TIME...
...BUT THERE ARE THINGS WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO TEST YET.
...
AND THAT'S WHETHER *OTHER PEOPLE* BESIDES YOU CAN GO INSIDE.
YES!
I *THINK* IT'LL WORK.
ON THE WAY OUT, THE DOOR CLOSES WHEN GETTY GOES IN, AND ON THE WAY BACK, IT CLOSES THE MOMENT I GET INSIDE THE TUNNEL.
WE MADE A BUTLER PLAY WITH US WHEN WE WERE KIDS.
SO I'M PRETTY SURE OTHER PEOPLE CAN GO IN BEFORE US.
I WANT TO TRY THIS OUT WITH YOU, MELODY.

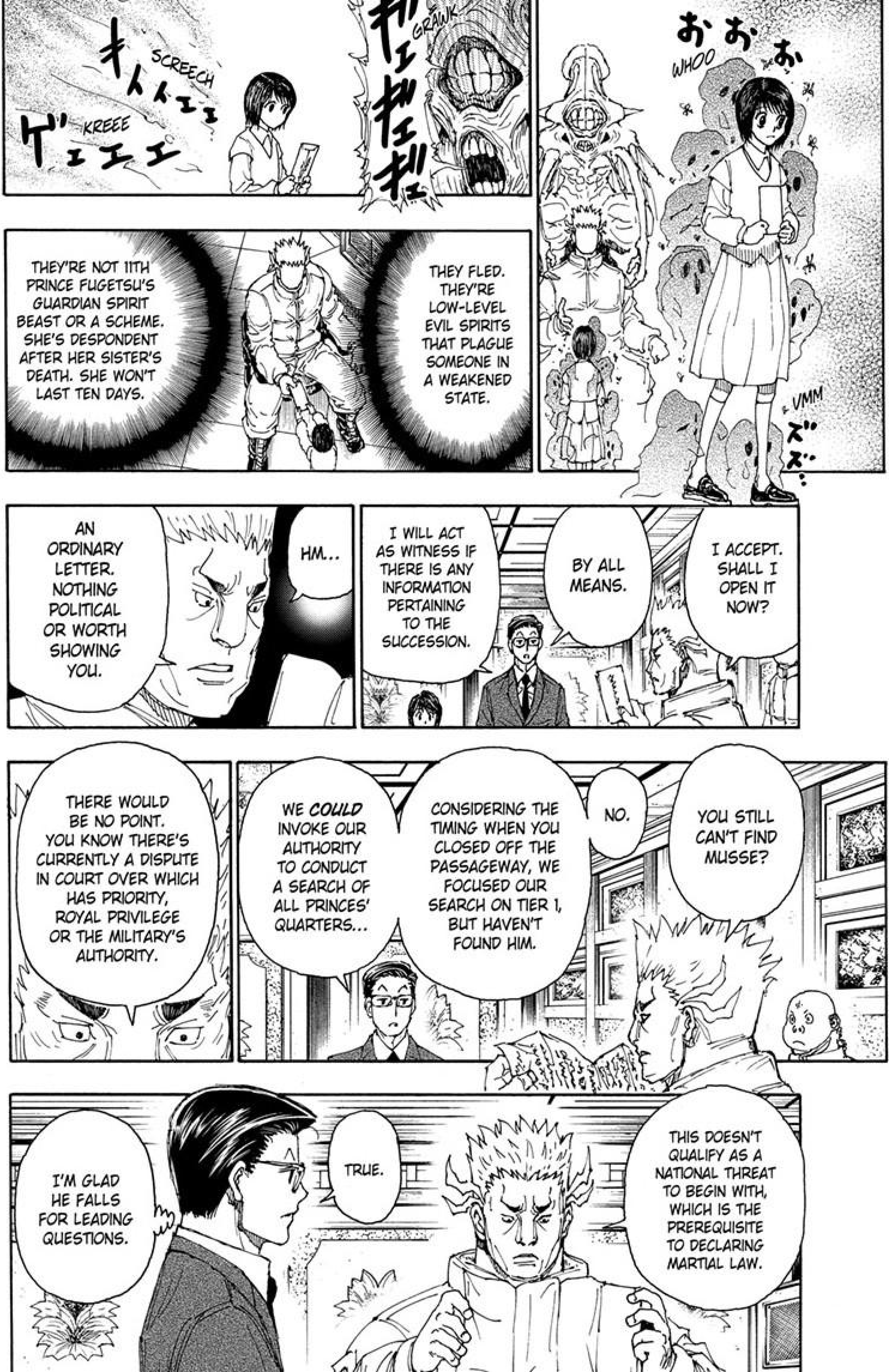

...
IDEALLY, WE WOULD HAVE PRINCE LUZURUS AGREE TO AN ESCAPE PLAN AND GET ON A LIFEBOAT VOLUNTARILY, BUT I DON'T THINK HE'S THAT STUPID.
YOUR ABILITY WOULD MAKE SURE IT HAPPENS!
EVEN BETTER WOULD BE IF WE COULD POISON OR STRANGLE HIM ON THE SPOT.
NO.
IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT.
KACHO, YOU'LL NEED MORE PEOPLE FOR YOUR PLAN.
SOMEONE WHO CAN CARRY PRINCE LUZURUS TO A LIFEBOAT WHILE HE'S KNOCKED OUT WITH MY FLUTE.
I'LL BE THE MULE.
HAVE IT DONE WHILE YOU'RE GETTING QUESTIONED TO ESTABLISH YOUR ALIBI.
PRINCE LUZURUS'S GUARDS WOULD CLAIM TO BE DECEIVED BY YOUR MUSIC, BUT THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM.
THERE WILL BE TRACES OF DRUGS IN THEIR URINE AND HAIR, SO WE CAN SAY THEY'RE LYING TO COVER UP FOR THEIR HALLUCINATION.
"THE PRINCE OVERDOSED, SPONTANEOUSLY TRIED TO ESCAPE, AND HAD A HEART ATTACK" SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE.
WELL?
SOUNDS LIKE A FINE PLAN, BUT...
...THERE'S ONE MAJOR PROBLEM.
WHERE WILL YOU CONNECT THE DOOR?
PRINCE LUZURUS'S BEDROOM.
FUGETSU WILL NEED TO GO THERE FIRST, RIGHT?
YES.
?
I DON'T GET IT. CAN YOU EXPLAIN?
FUGETSU NEEDS TO HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN TO A PLACE TO USE HER DOOR TO GO THERE AGAIN.
IN THIS CASE, HIS BEDROOM.

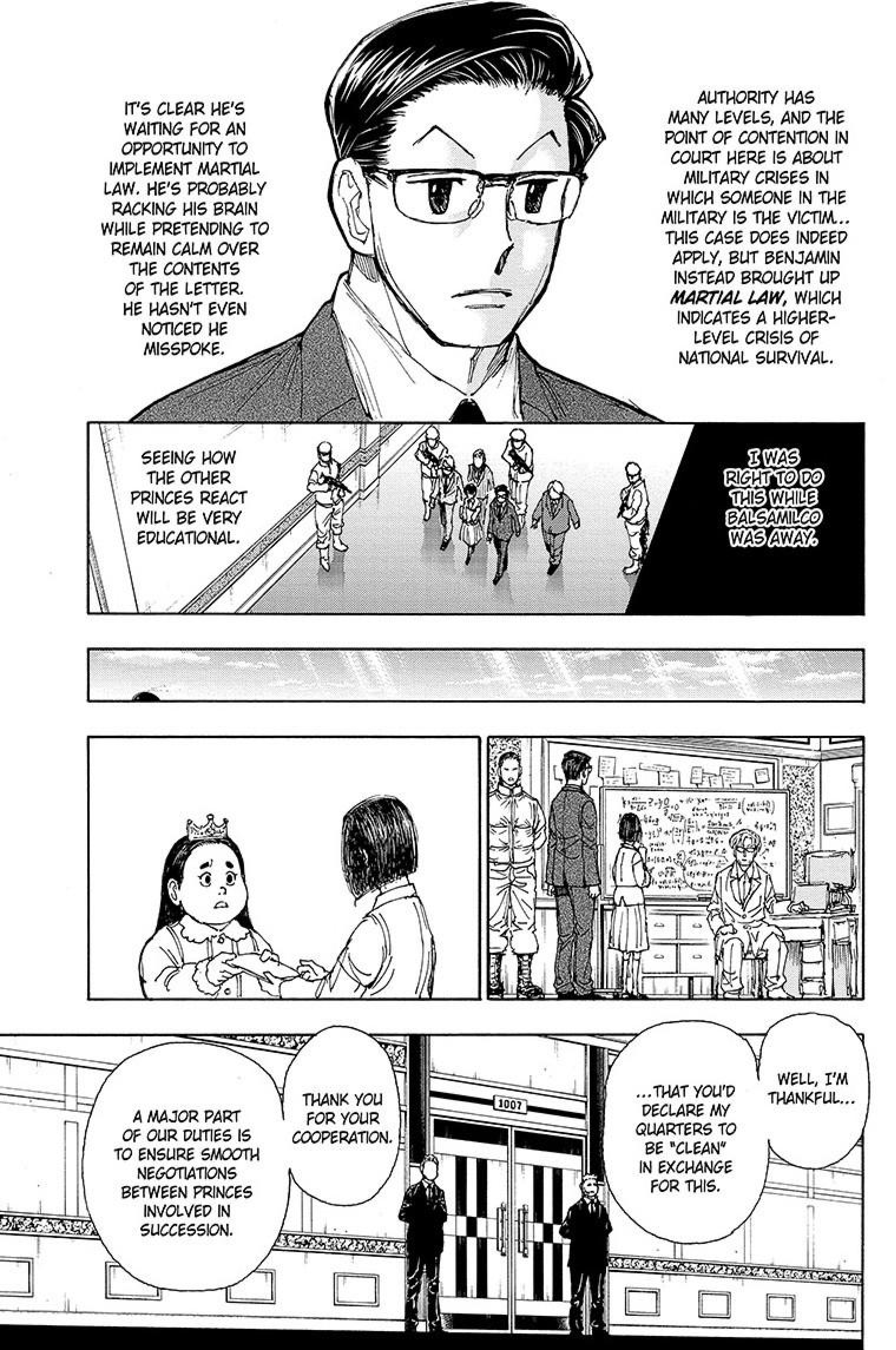

ALL RIGHT, I CAN TAKE CARE OF THAT.
COME UP WITH A REASON WHY PRINCE FUGETSU HAS TO PERSONALLY MEET WITH EACH PRINCE.
WE'D ACCOMPANY HER, SO THERE'S NO DANGER OF ASSASSINATION.
EACH PRINCE? NOT JUST PRINCE LUZURUS?
IT WOULD BE BEST TO MAXIMIZE THE PLACES SHE CAN GO, RIGHT?
IT'LL COVER OUR TRACKS, AND COME IN USEFUL LATER.
YEAH. THAT WOULD BE CONVENIENT.
OKAY.
HOW DOES *THIS* SOUND?
NOT BAD.
EVERYONE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN A LETTER CONTAINING PRINCE KACHO'S LAST MESSAGE, AND AS LONG AS WE GUARANTEE THEIR SAFETY, IT'S LIKELY THEY'LL ACCEPT.
FOR SECURITY REASONS, SHOWING UP AT THEIR QUARTERS UNANNOUNCED ISN'T UNNATURAL.
I'M NOT SURE THEY'D LET A LOWER-RANKED PRINCE INSIDE AND ACCEPT IT PERSONALLY.
I'M SURE PRINCE LUZURUS HAS A LOT OF STUFF HE'D RATHER NOT SHOW *YOU*.
THAT WILL DEPEND ON MY NEGOTIATING SKILLS.
WORST CASE, I COULD FORCE AN EXCUSE TO SEARCH HIS QUARTERS. WARN PRINCE FUGETSU.
SO...
I TOLD YOU HOW I FEEL ALREADY, RIGHT?
YES, YES, I'M WELL AWARE.
LET ME JUST MAKE SURE.

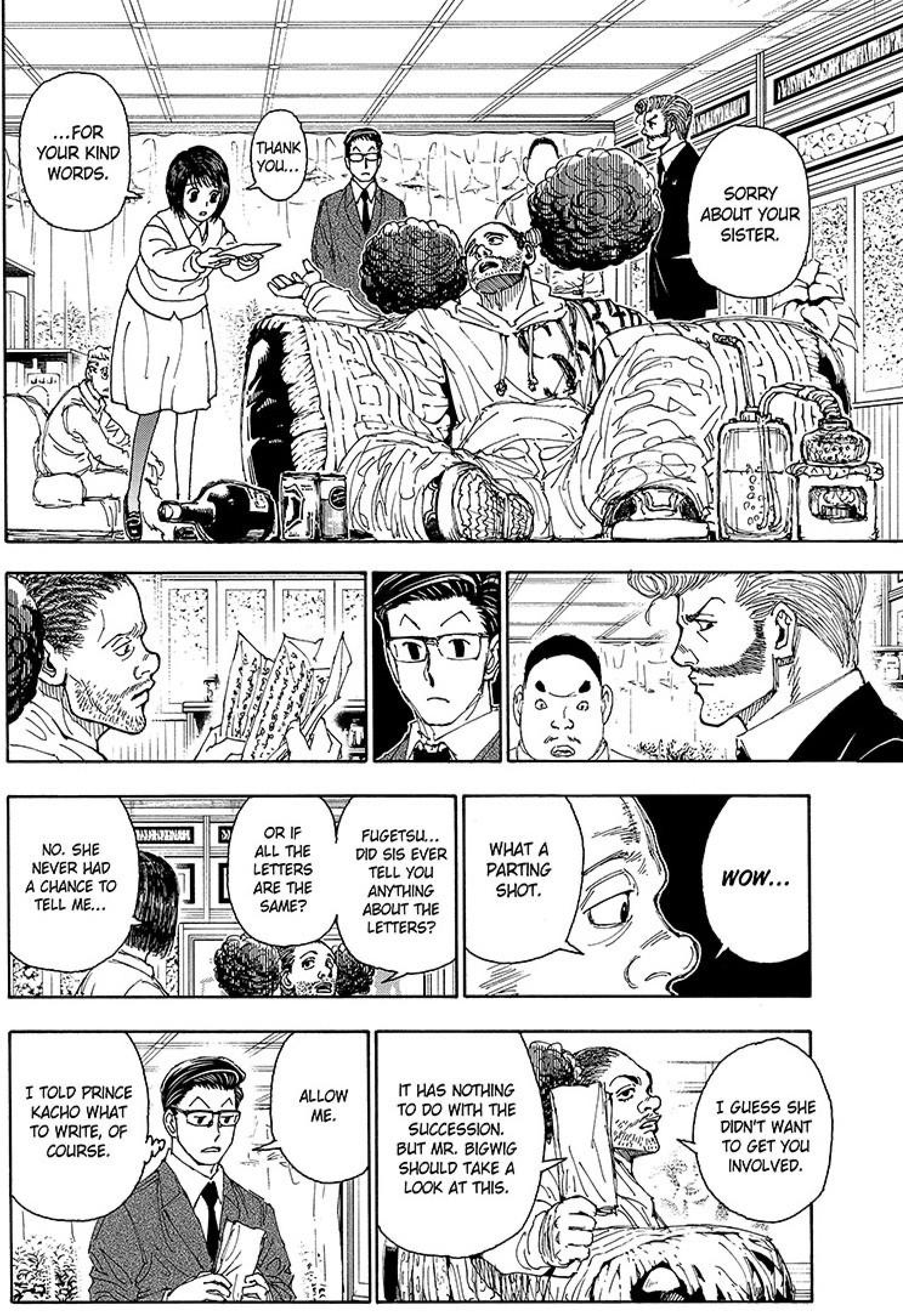

THERE'S NO TURNING BACK AFTER THIS.
ARE YOU *SURE* YOU WANT TO RISK EVERYTHING?
OF COURSE.
I'M NOT JUST DOING THIS OUT OF MY FEELINGS FOR YOU.
IT'S BECAUSE I THINK IT WOULD BE BEST FOR PRINCE FUGETSU TO TAKE THE THRONE AND CHANGE THE WHOLE SYSTEM.
HAVING PRINCE KACHO BY HER SIDE WOULD PROTECT HER FROM HER MOTHER'S MEDDLING AS WELL.
I DON'T DETECT ANY CHANGE IN HIS HEARTBEAT...
IF I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HIS TRUE INTENT, I'LL HAVE TO ASSUME HE'S ON THE ENEMY'S SIDE.
I DIDN'T JOIN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO BLINDLY UPHOLD THE LAW.
IT'S TO GET THE WORLD CLOSER TO MY IDEAL, GENTLER WORLD.
AT LEAST HE, OR THE ONE WHO'S MANIPULATING HIM, STILL CONSIDERS US USEFUL!
I HAVE TO MAINTAIN THIS RELATIONSHIP FOR NOW...
I CAN DO THE DIRTY WORK TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN...
...EVEN IF I LOSE THE RIGHT TO JOIN THAT GENTLER WORLD.
...IN ORDER TO PROTECT PRINCE FUGETSU.

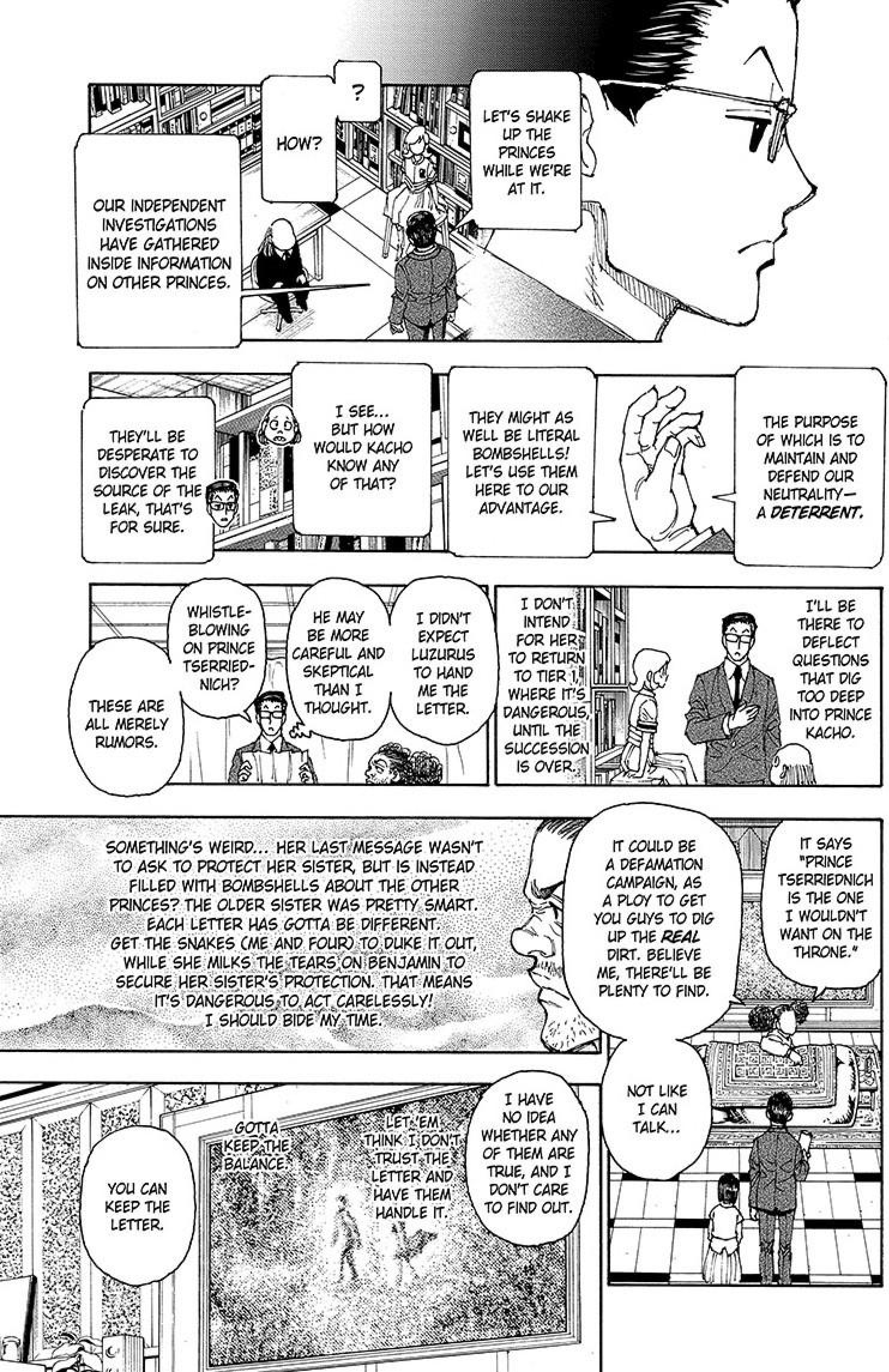

SHK
ザッ
SHK
ザッ
SHK
ザッ
CHIEF!
WE'D LIKE AN AUDIENCE WITH THE FIRST PRINCE.
MAY I ASK WHY?
WE'D LIKE TO PERSONALLY HAND HIM A LETTER FROM 10TH PRINCE KACHO.
WARNING

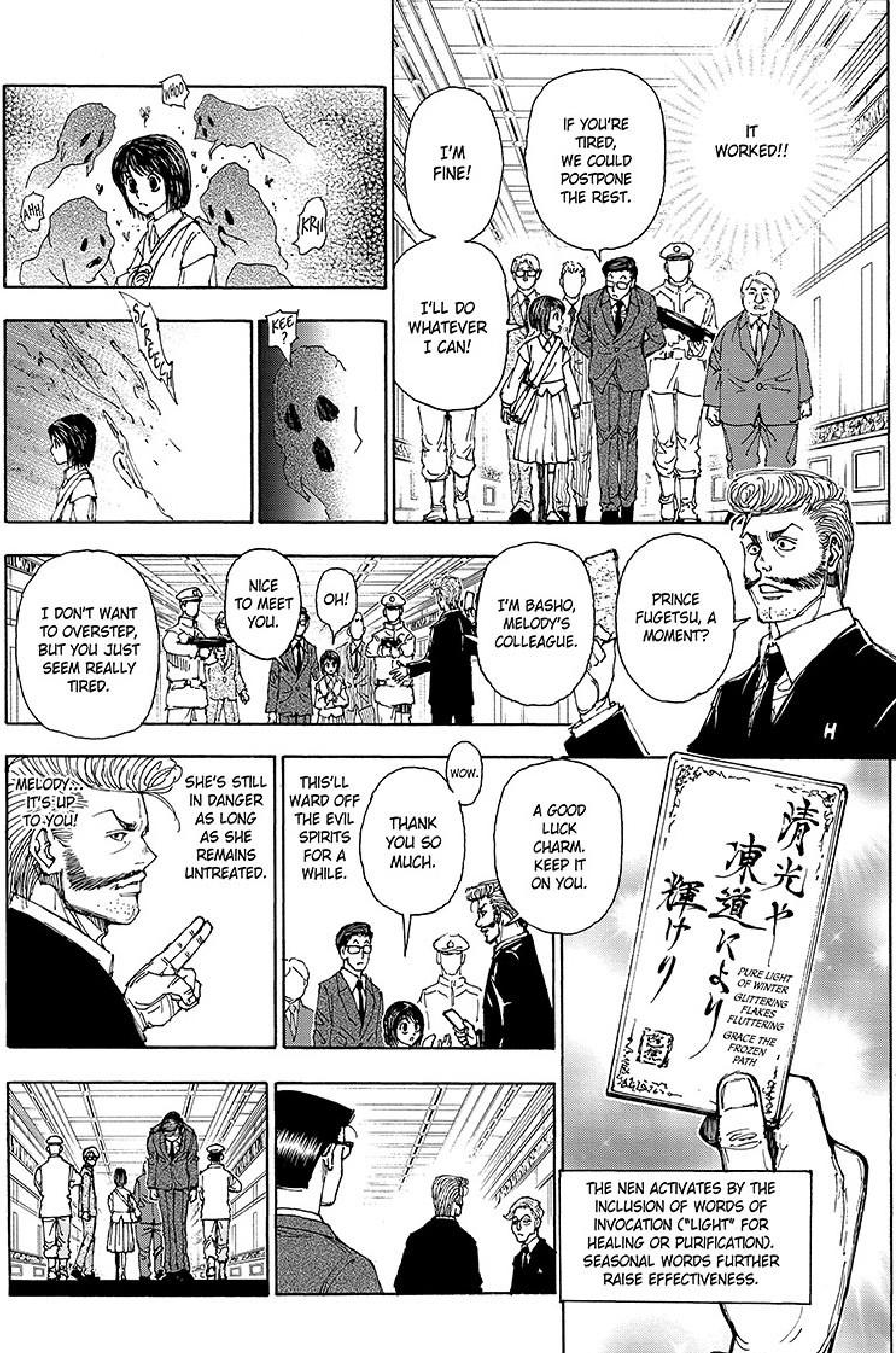

PRINCE KACHO HAS PASSED AWAY, BUT SHE WROTE LETTERS TO ALL THE PRINCES WHILE SHE WAS ALIVE. SHE LEFT INSTRUCTIONS...
...TO PERSONALLY HAND THE LETTERS TO EACH PRINCE IF SHE DIED.
WE CAN GUARANTEE THAT THERE'S NO DANGER OF EXPLOSIVES OR TOXINS. WE WOULD LIKE PERMISSION FOR PRINCE FUGETSU TO HAND THE LETTER TO THE FIRST PRINCE, UNDER OUR SUPERVISION.
I CAN TAKE IT TO HIM.
SHF
ザッ
IT COULD BE AN OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION ABOUT THE SUCCESSION.
DEFYING A DEAD PRINCE'S WISHES COULD LEAD TO DISQUALIFICATION.
PLEASE CONTACT THE PRINCE.
LET THEM THROUGH.
THERE'S ONE POINT OF CONCERN...
WHAT?
VMM
ズズ…
MY GOD... SHE'S ON HER LAST LEGS.
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR AUDIENCE.
MAY I... STEP OVER THERE?
OF COURSE.

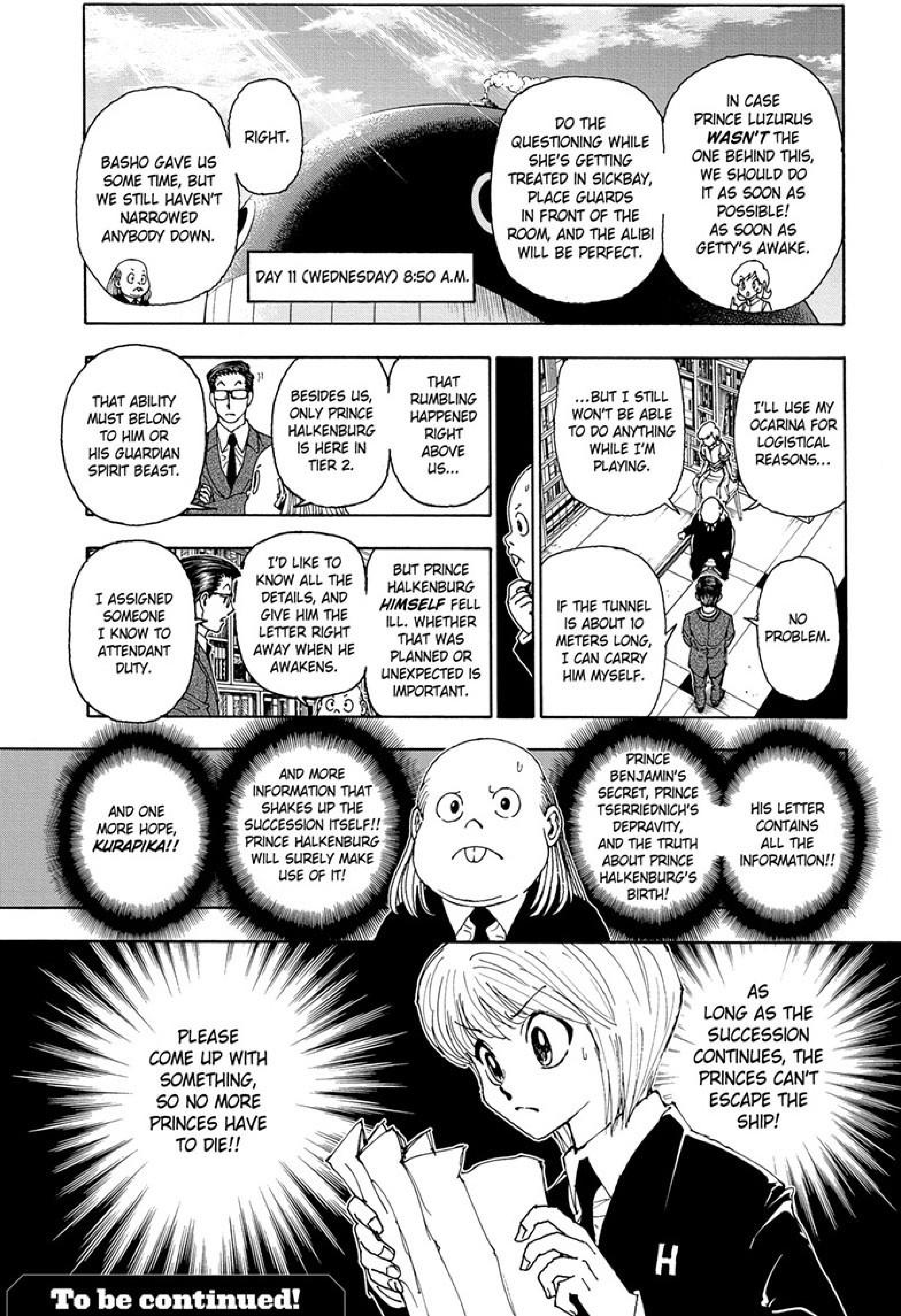

おおお
WHOO
ズズ
VMM
ギェギェギェ
GRAWK
キィィェェ
SCREECH
ゲェエエ
KREEE
THEY FLED. THEY'RE LOW-LEVEL EVIL SPIRITS THAT PLAGUE SOMEONE IN A WEAKENED STATE.
THEY'RE NOT 11TH PRINCE FUGETSU'S GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST OR A SCHEME. SHE'S DESPONDENT AFTER HER SISTER'S DEATH. SHE WON'T LAST TEN DAYS.
I ACCEPT. SHALL I OPEN IT NOW?
BY ALL MEANS.
I WILL ACT AS WITNESS IF THERE IS ANY INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE SUCCESSION.
HM...
AN ORDINARY LETTER. NOTHING POLITICAL OR WORTH SHOWING YOU.
YOU STILL CAN'T FIND MUSSE?
NO.
CONSIDERING THE TIMING WHEN YOU CLOSED OFF THE PASSAGEWAY, WE FOCUSED OUR SEARCH ON TIER 1, BUT HAVEN'T FOUND HIM.
WE *COULD* INVOKE OUR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A SEARCH OF ALL PRINCES' QUARTERS...
THERE WOULD BE NO POINT. YOU KNOW THERE'S CURRENTLY A DISPUTE IN COURT OVER WHICH HAS PRIORITY, ROYAL PRIVILEGE OR THE MILITARY'S AUTHORITY.
THIS DOESN'T QUALIFY AS A NATIONAL THREAT TO BEGIN WITH, WHICH IS THE PREREQUISITE TO DECLARING MARTIAL LAW.
TRUE.
I'M GLAD HE FALLS FOR LEADING QUESTIONS.


AUTHORITY HAS MANY LEVELS, AND THE POINT OF CONTENTION IN COURT HERE IS ABOUT MILITARY CRISES IN WHICH SOMEONE IN THE MILITARY IS THE VICTIM.. THIS CASE DOES INDEED APPLY, BUT BENJAMIN INSTEAD BROUGHT UP ***MARTIAL LAW,*** WHICH INDICATES A HIGHER-LEVEL CRISIS OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL.
IT'S CLEAR HE'S WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT MARTIAL LAW. HE'S PROBABLY RACKING HIS BRAIN WHILE PRETENDING TO REMAIN CALM OVER THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER. HE HASN'T EVEN NOTICED HE MISSPOKE.
I WAS RIGHT TO DO THIS WHILE BALSAMILCO WAS AWAY.
SEEING HOW THE OTHER PRINCES REACT WILL BE VERY EDUCATIONAL.
1007
WELL, I'M THANKFUL...
...THAT YOU'D DECLARE MY QUARTERS TO BE "CLEAN" IN EXCHANGE FOR THIS.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
A MAJOR PART OF OUR DUTIES IS TO ENSURE SMOOTH NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PRINCES INVOLVED IN SUCCESSION.


SORRY ABOUT YOUR SISTER.
THANK YOU...
...FOR YOUR KIND WORDS.
WOW...
WHAT A PARTING SHOT.
FUGETSU... DID SIS EVER TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT THE LETTERS?
OR IF ALL THE LETTERS ARE THE SAME?
NO. SHE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO TELL ME...
I GUESS SHE DIDN'T WANT TO GET YOU INVOLVED.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SUCCESSION. BUT MR. BIGWIG SHOULD TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
ALLOW ME.
I TOLD PRINCE KACHO WHAT TO WRITE, OF COURSE.

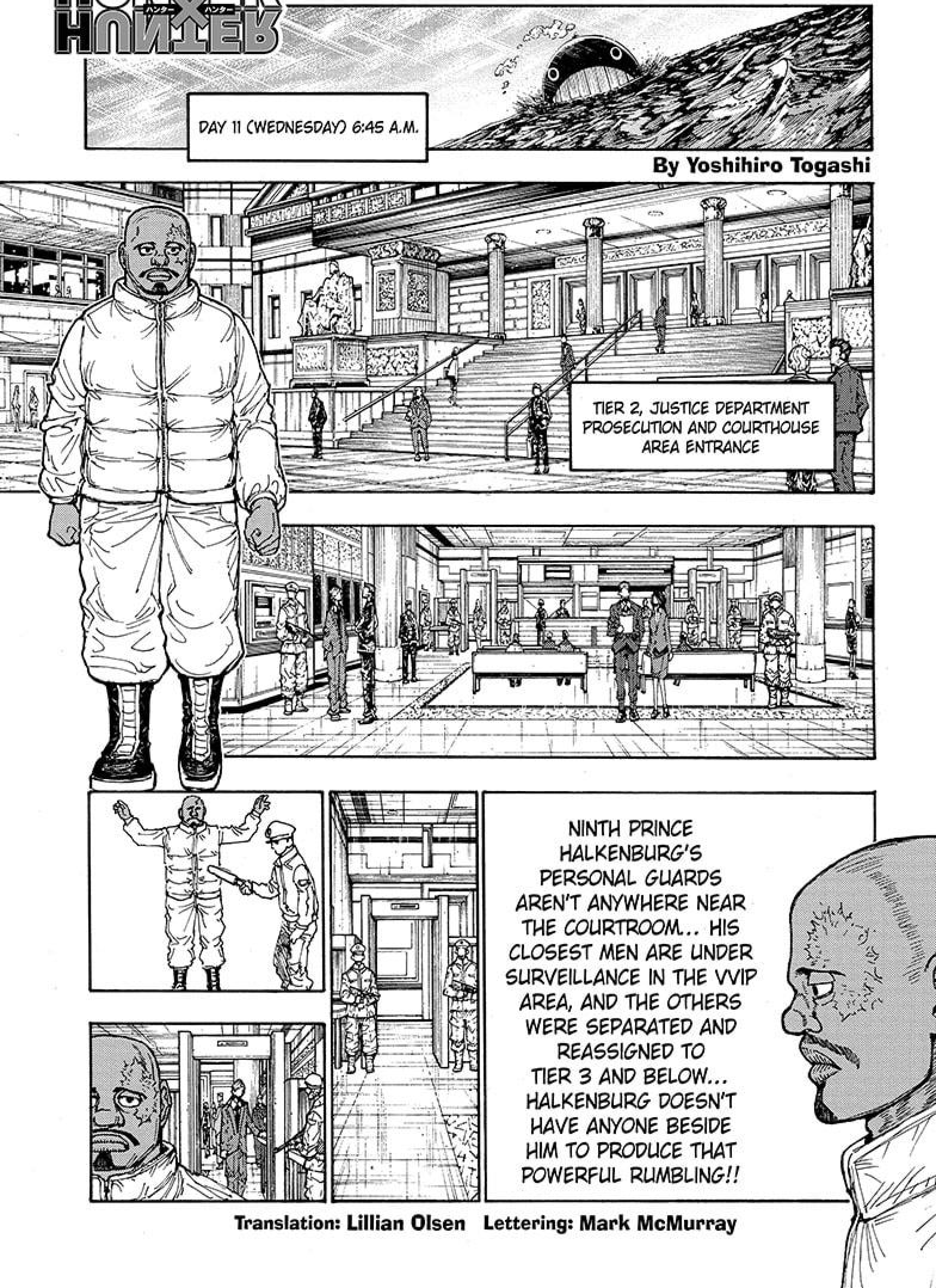

LET'S SHAKE UP THE PRINCES WHILE WE'RE AT IT.
?
HOW?
OUR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS HAVE GATHERED INSIDE INFORMATION ON OTHER PRINCES.
THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO MAINTAIN AND DEFEND OUR NEUTRALITY— A *DETERRENT.*
THEY MIGHT AS WELL BE LITERAL BOMBSHELLS! LET'S USE THEM HERE TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
I SEE... BUT HOW WOULD KACHO KNOW ANY OF THAT?
THEY'LL BE DESPERATE TO DISCOVER THE SOURCE OF THE LEAK, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I'LL BE THERE TO DEFLECT QUESTIONS THAT DIG TOO DEEP INTO PRINCE KACHO.
I DON'T INTEND FOR HER TO RETURN TO TIER 1, WHERE IT'S DANGEROUS, UNTIL THE SUCCESSION IS OVER.
I DIDN'T EXPECT LUZURUS TO HAND ME THE LETTER.
HE MAY BE MORE CAREFUL AND SKEPTICAL THAN I THOUGHT.
WHISTLEBLOWING ON PRINCE TSERRIEDNICH?
THESE ARE ALL MERELY RUMORS.
IT SAYS "PRINCE TSERRIEDNICH IS THE ONE I WOULDN'T WANT ON THE THRONE."
IT COULD BE A DEFAMATION CAMPAIGN, AS A PLOY TO GET YOU GUYS TO DIG UP THE *REAL* DIRT. BELIEVE ME, THERE'LL BE PLENTY TO FIND.
SOMETHING'S WEIRD... HER LAST MESSAGE WASN'T TO ASK TO PROTECT HER SISTER, BUT IS INSTEAD FILLED WITH BOMBSHELLS ABOUT THE OTHER PRINCES? THE OLDER SISTER WAS PRETTY SMART. EACH LETTER HAS GOTTA BE DIFFERENT. GET THE SNAKES (ME AND FOUR) TO DUKE IT OUT, WHILE SHE MILKS THE TEARS ON BENJAMIN TO SECURE HER SISTER'S PROTECTION. THAT MEANS IT'S DANGEROUS TO ACT CARELESSLY! I SHOULD BIDE MY TIME.
NOT LIKE I CAN TALK...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHETHER ANY OF THEM ARE TRUE, AND I DON'T CARE TO FIND OUT.
LET 'EM THINK I DON'T TRUST THE LETTER AND HAVE THEM HANDLE IT.
GOTTA KEEP THE BALANCE.
YOU CAN KEEP THE LETTER.


IT WORKED!!
IF YOU'RE TIRED, WE COULD POSTPONE THE REST.
I'M FINE!
I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN!
WHOO
KRII
AHH
KEE?
SCREEE
PRINCE FUGETSU, A MOMENT?
I'M BASHO, MELODY'S COLLEAGUE.
OH!
NICE TO MEET YOU.
I DON'T WANT TO OVERSTEP, BUT YOU JUST SEEM REALLY TIRED.
清光や
凍道により
輝けり
PURE LIGHT OF WINTER
GLITTERING FLAKES FLUTTERING
GRACE THE FROZEN PATH
THE NEN ACTIVATES BY THE INCLUSION OF WORDS OF INVOCATION ("LIGHT" FOR HEALING OR PURIFICATION). SEASONAL WORDS FURTHER RAISE EFFECTIVENESS.
A GOOD LUCK CHARM. KEEP IT ON YOU.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
WOW.
THIS'LL WARD OFF THE EVIL SPIRITS FOR A WHILE.
SHE'S STILL IN DANGER AS LONG AS SHE REMAINS UNTREATED.
MELODY... IT'S UP TO YOU!


IN CASE PRINCE LUZURUS ***WASN'T*** THE ONE BEHIND THIS, WE SHOULD DO IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! AS SOON AS GETTY'S AWAKE.
DO THE QUESTIONING WHILE SHE'S GETTING TREATED IN SICKBAY, PLACE GUARDS IN FRONT OF THE ROOM, AND THE ALIBI WILL BE PERFECT.
DAY 11 (WEDNESDAY) 8:50 A.M.
RIGHT.
BASHO GAVE US SOME TIME, BUT WE STILL HAVEN'T NARROWED ANYBODY DOWN.
I'LL USE MY OCARINA FOR LOGISTICAL REASONS...
...BUT I STILL WON'T BE ABLE TO DO ANYTHING WHILE I'M PLAYING.
NO PROBLEM.
IF THE TUNNEL IS ABOUT 10 METERS LONG, I CAN CARRY HIM MYSELF.
THAT RUMBLING HAPPENED RIGHT ABOVE US...
BESIDES US, ONLY PRINCE HALKENBURG IS HERE IN TIER 2.
THAT ABILITY MUST BELONG TO HIM OR HIS GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST.
BUT PRINCE HALKENBURG ***HIMSELF*** FELL ILL. WHETHER THAT WAS PLANNED OR UNEXPECTED IS IMPORTANT.
I'D LIKE TO KNOW ALL THE DETAILS, AND GIVE HIM THE LETTER RIGHT AWAY WHEN HE AWAKENS.
I ASSIGNED SOMEONE I KNOW TO ATTENDANT DUTY.
HIS LETTER CONTAINS ALL THE INFORMATION!!
PRINCE BENJAMIN'S SECRET, PRINCE TSERRIEDNICH'S DEPRAVITY, AND THE TRUTH ABOUT PRINCE HALKENBURG'S BIRTH!
AND MORE INFORMATION THAT SHAKES UP THE SUCCESSION ITSELF!! PRINCE HALKENBURG WILL SURELY MAKE USE OF IT!
AND ONE MORE HOPE, ***KURAPIKA!!***
AS LONG AS THE SUCCESSION CONTINUES, THE PRINCES CAN'T ESCAPE THE SHIP!
PLEASE COME UP WITH SOMETHING, SO NO MORE PRINCES HAVE TO DIE!!
H
To be continued!

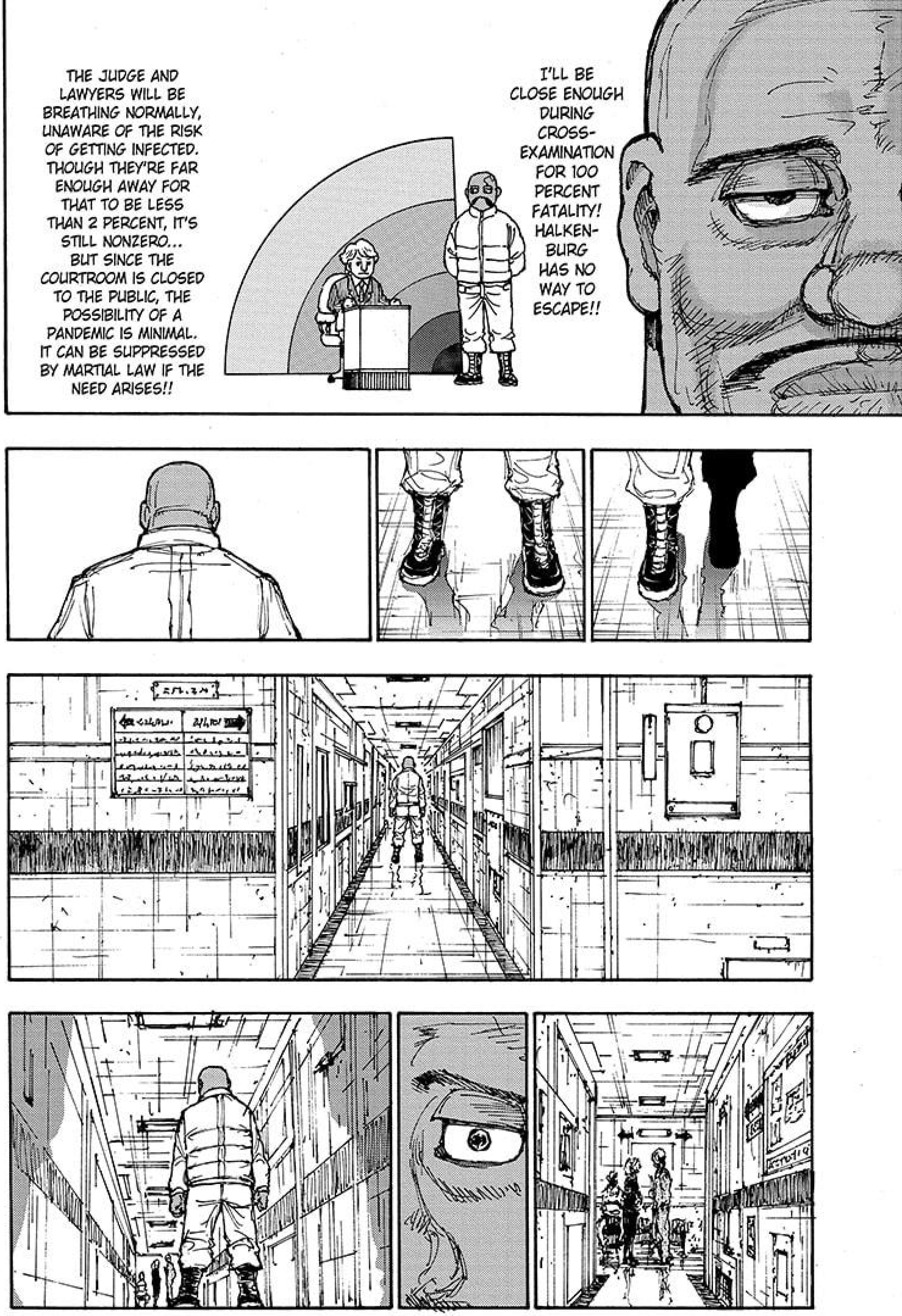
HUNTER×HUNTER

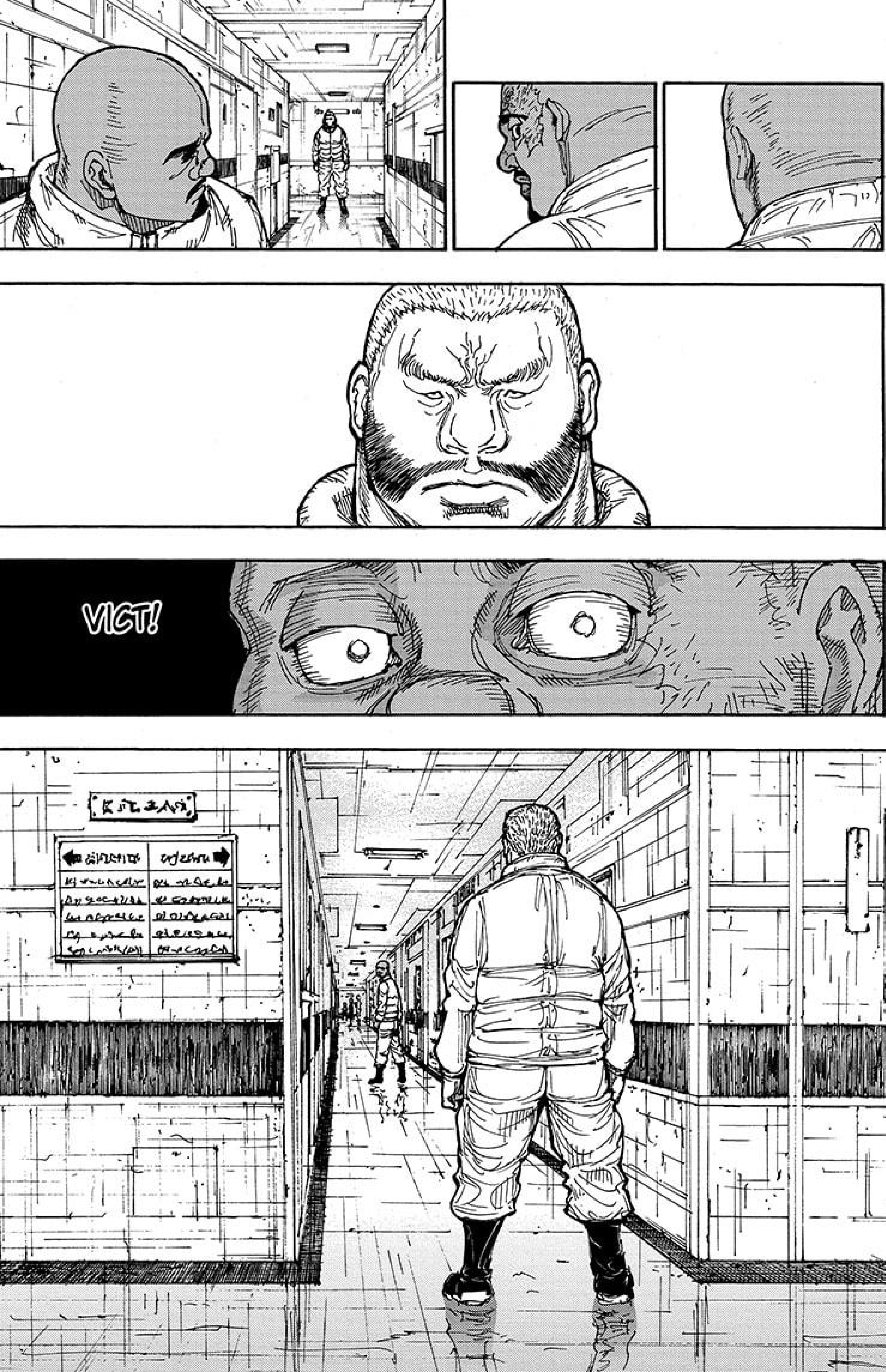
No. 403: Results

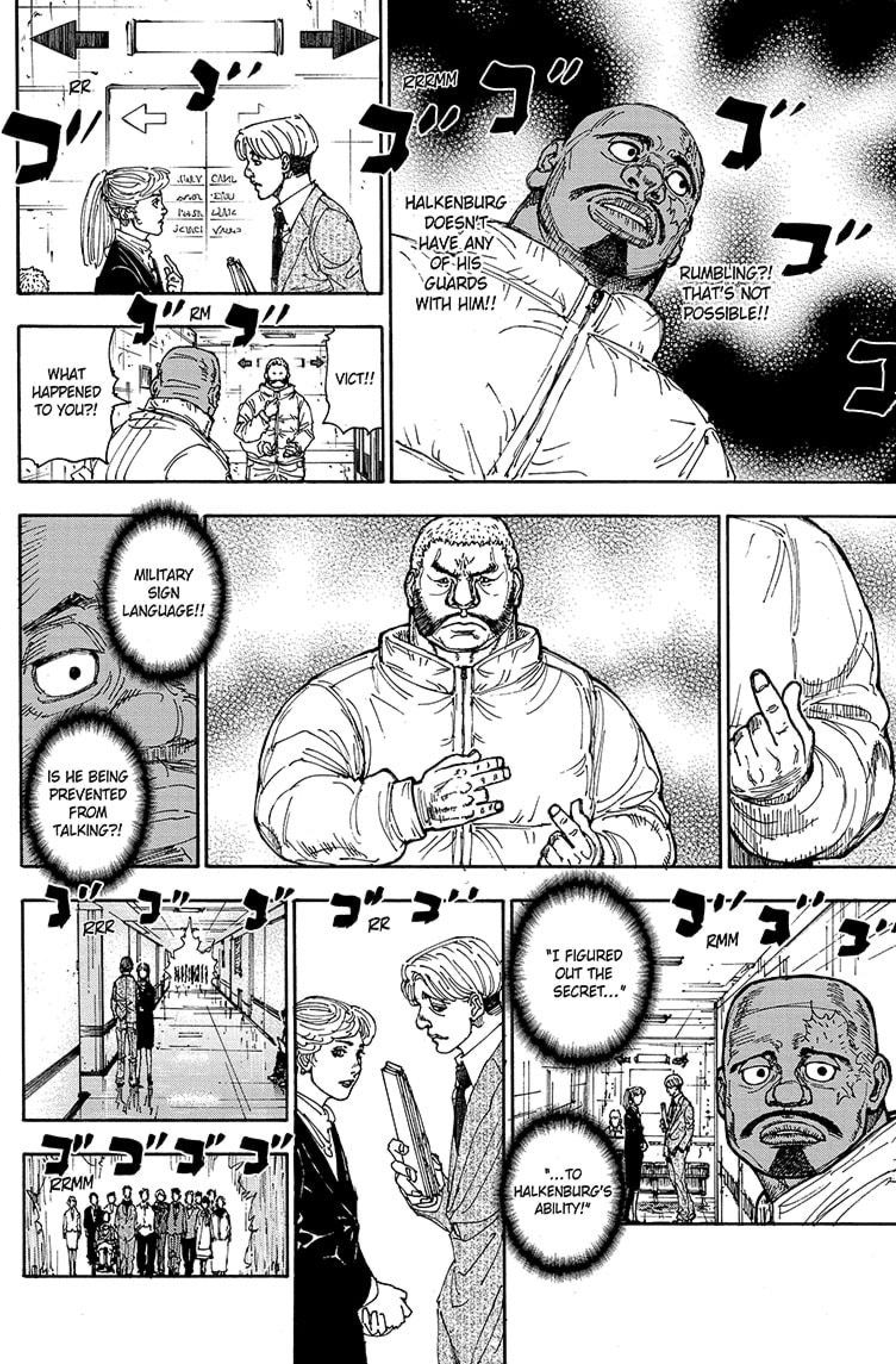

DAY 11 (WEDNESDAY) 6:45 A.M.
TIER 2, JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PROSECUTION AND COURTHOUSE AREA ENTRANCE
NINTH PRINCE HALKENBURG'S PERSONAL GUARDS AREN'T ANYWHERE NEAR THE COURTROOM… HIS CLOSEST MEN ARE UNDER SURVEILLANCE IN THE VVIP AREA, AND THE OTHERS WERE SEPARATED AND REASSIGNED TO TIER 3 AND BELOW… HALKENBURG DOESN'T HAVE ANYONE BESIDE HIM TO PRODUCE THAT POWERFUL RUMBLING!!

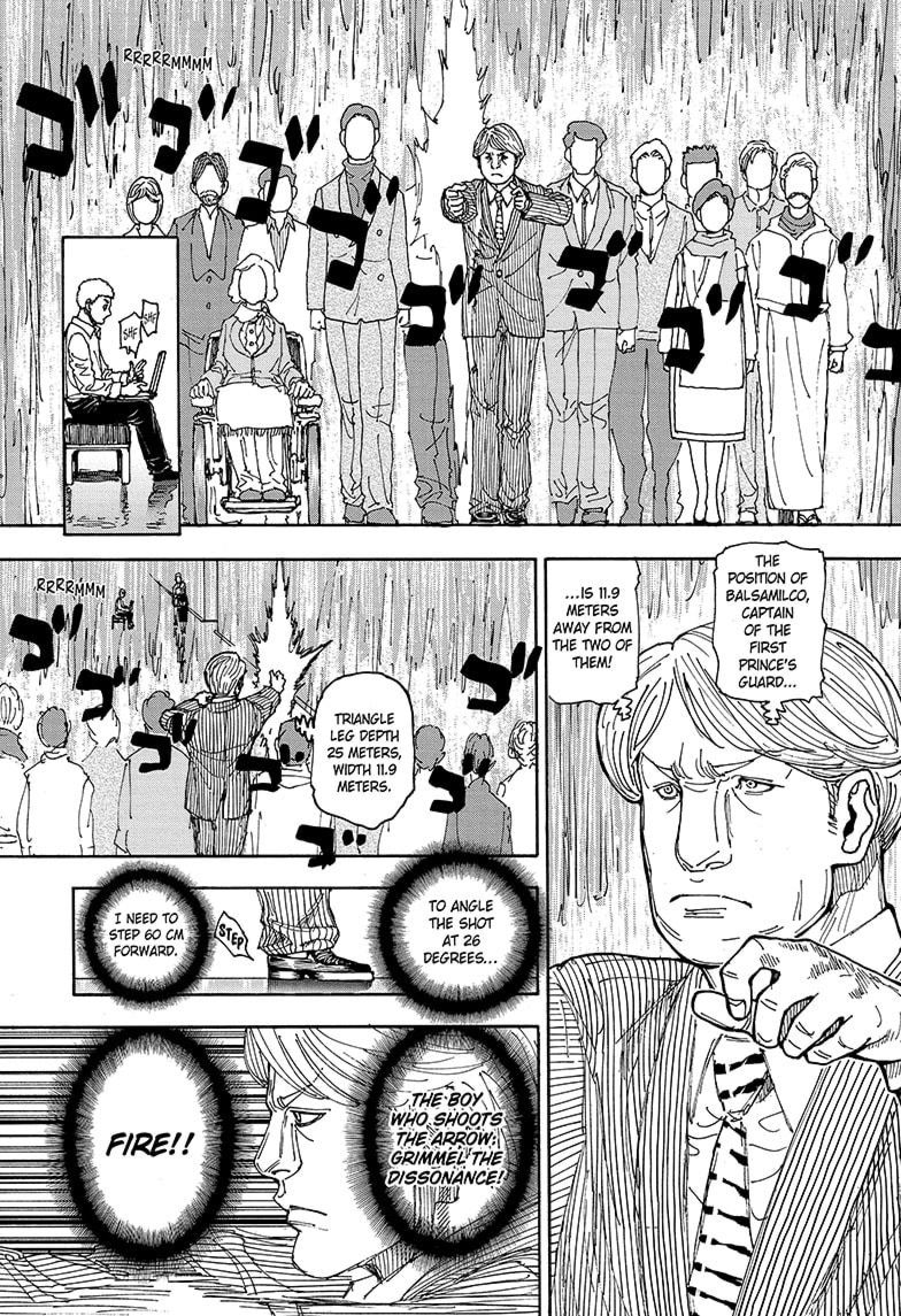
By Yoshihiro Togashi

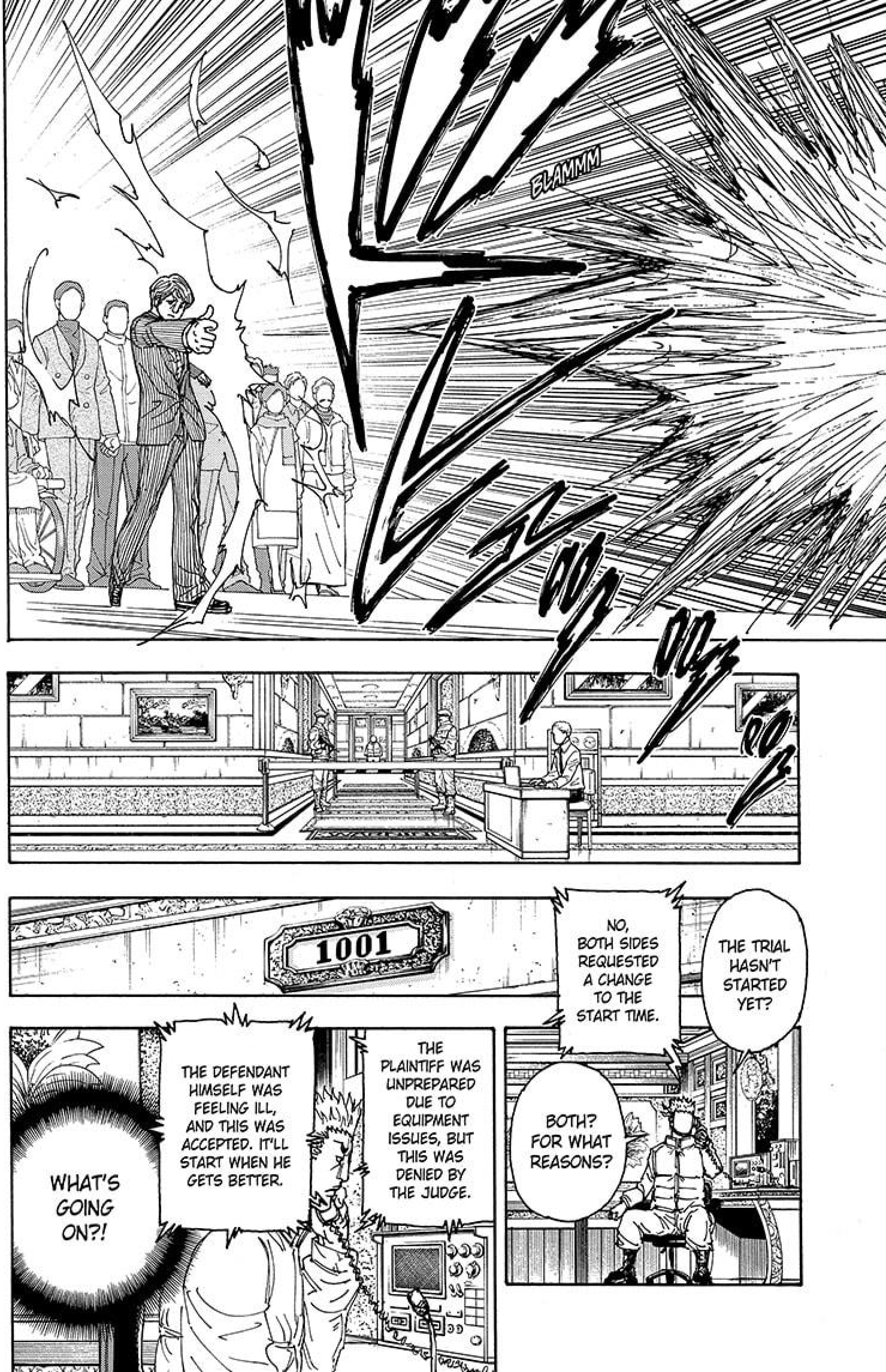
Translation: Lillian Olsen Lettering: Mark McMurray

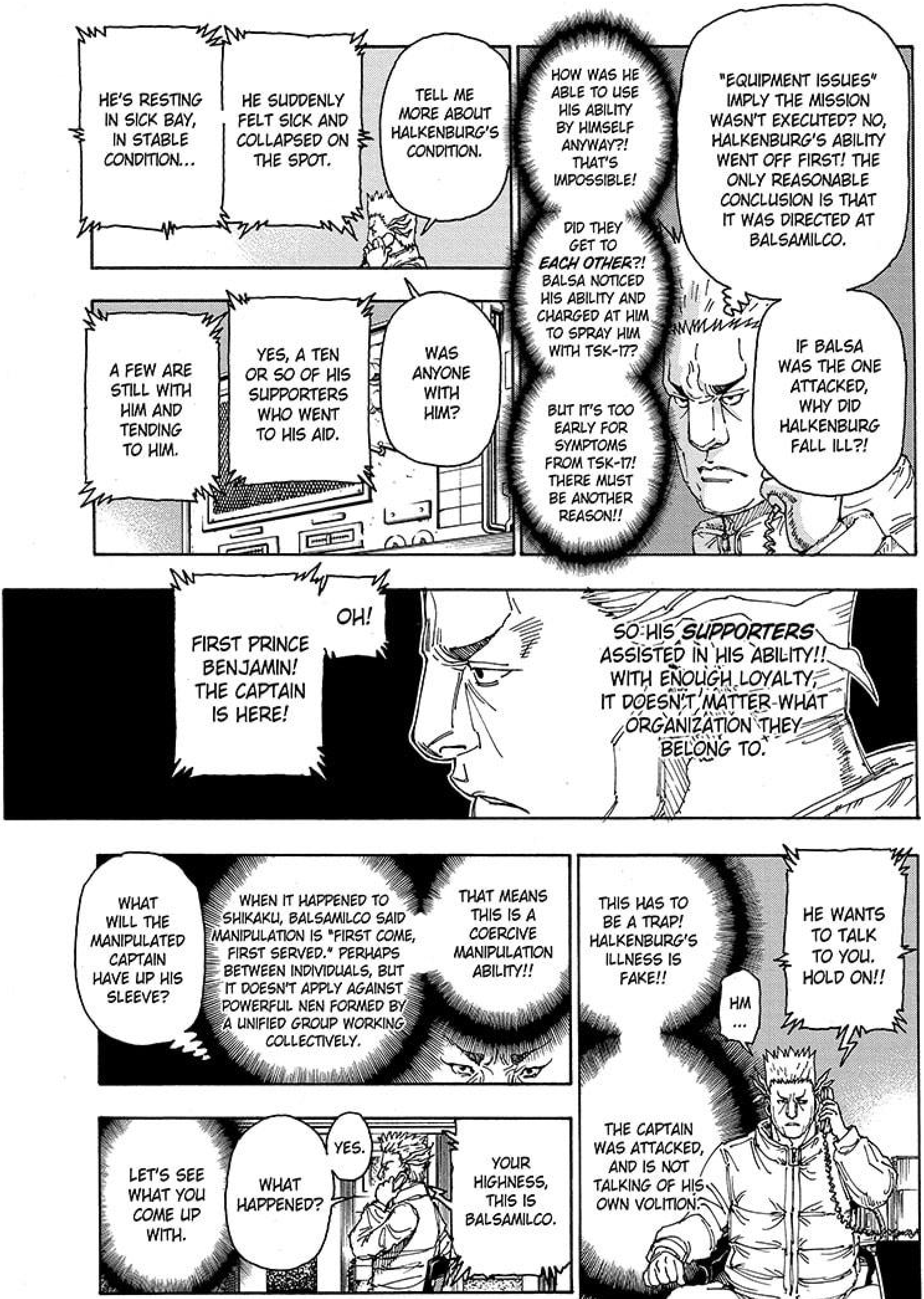

I'LL BE CLOSE ENOUGH DURING CROSS-EXAMINATION FOR 100 PERCENT FATALITY! HALKENBURG HAS NO WAY TO ESCAPE!!
THE JUDGE AND LAWYERS WILL BE BREATHING NORMALLY, UNAWARE OF THE RISK OF GETTING INFECTED. THOUGH THEY'RE FAR ENOUGH AWAY FOR THAT TO BE LESS THAN 2 PERCENT, IT'S STILL NONZERO... BUT SINCE THE COURTROOM IS CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC, THE POSSIBILITY OF A PANDEMIC IS MINIMAL. IT CAN BE SUPPRESSED BY MARTIAL LAW IF THE NEED ARISES!!

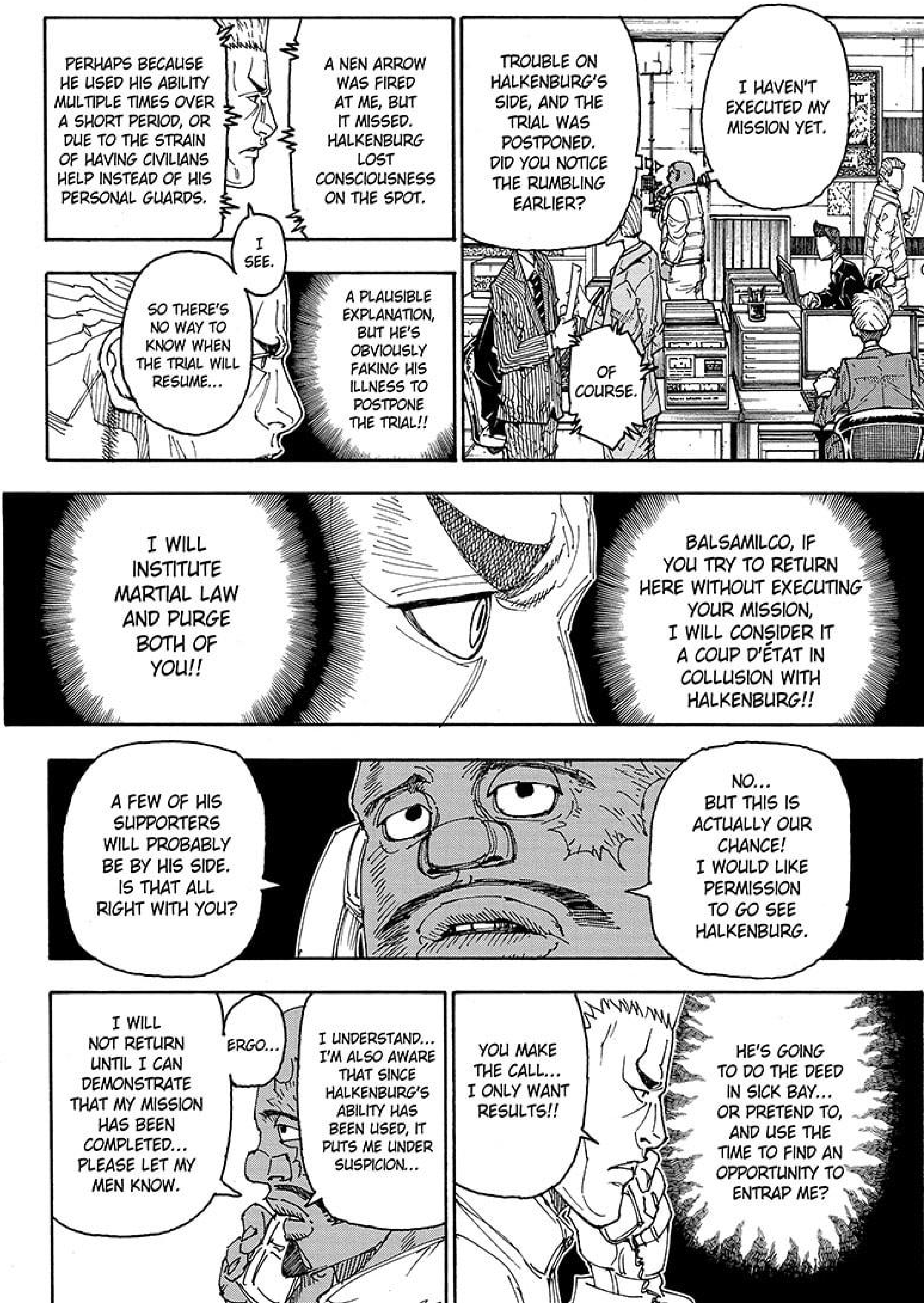

VICT!

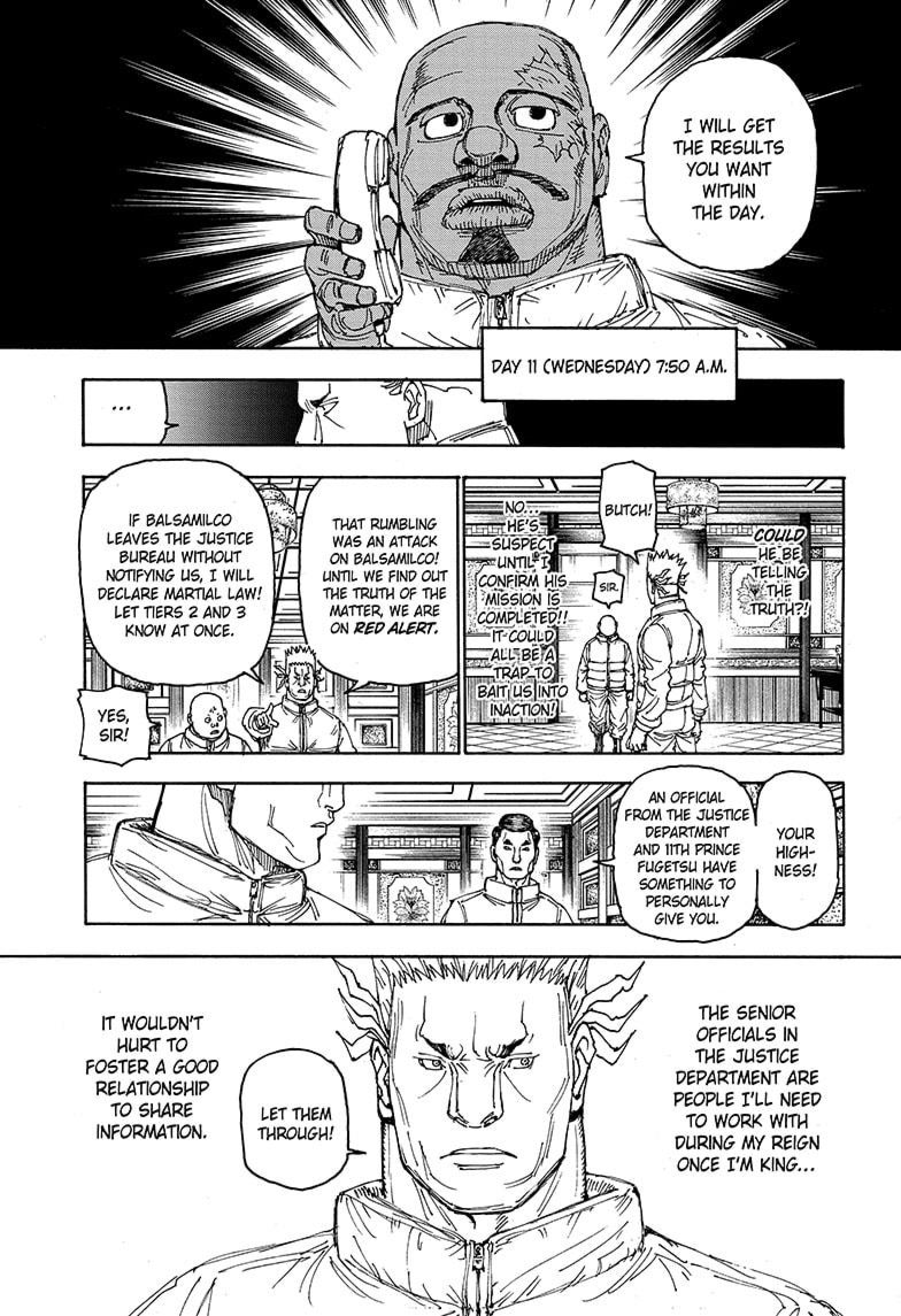

ゴゴゴゴ
RRRMM
HALKENBURG DOESN'T HAVE ANY OF HIS GUARDS WITH HIM!!
RUMBLING?! THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE!!
ゴゴ
RR
ゴゴ
RM
VICT!!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!
MILITARY SIGN LANGUAGE!!
IS HE BEING PREVENTED FROM TALKING?!
ゴゴゴ
RMM
"I FIGURED OUT THE SECRET..."
"...TO HALKENBURG'S ABILITY!"
ゴゴ
RR
ゴゴゴ
RRR
ゴゴゴゴ
RRMM

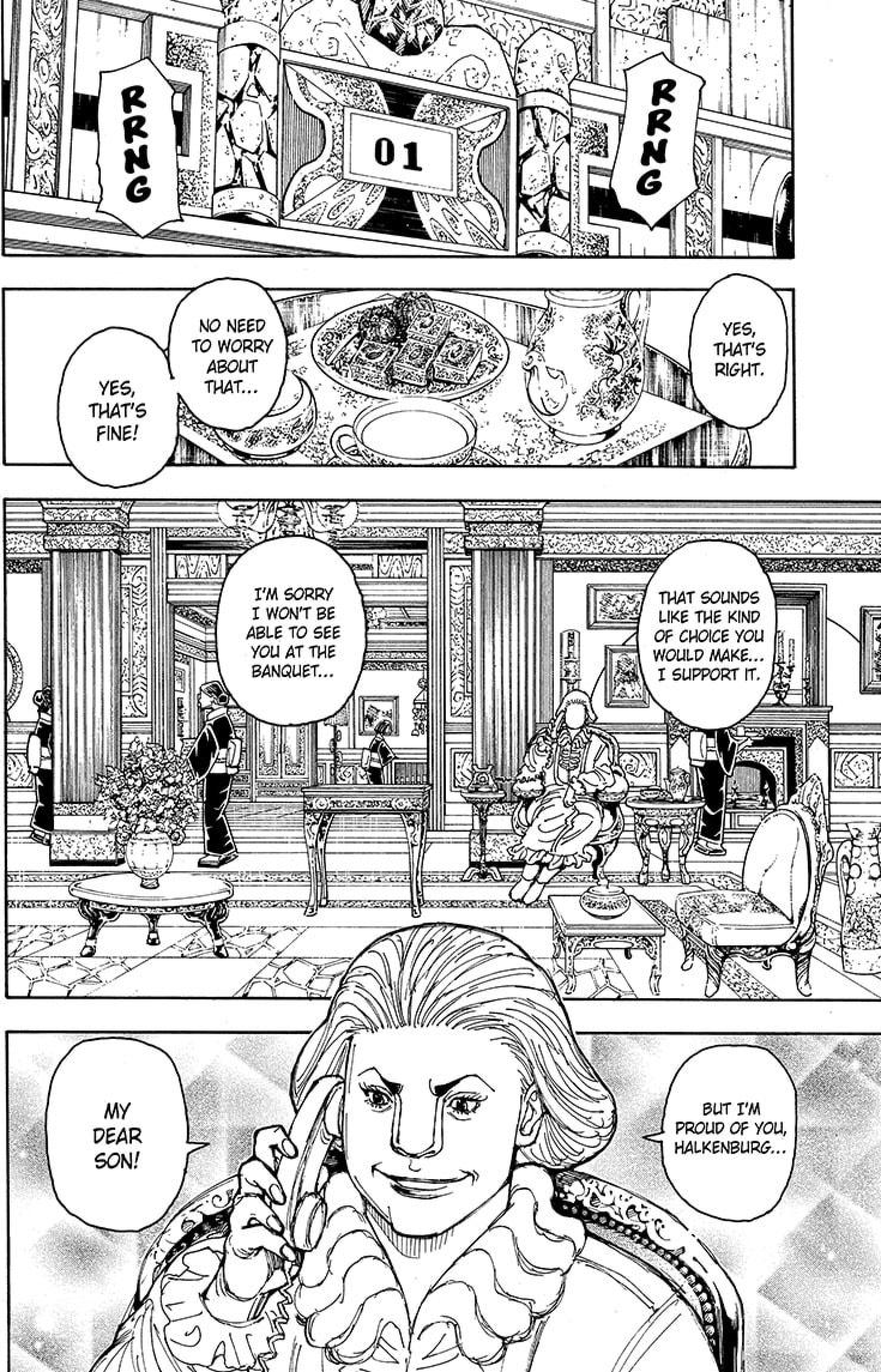

RRRRRMMMM
ゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴ
SHF
SHF
THE POSITION OF BALSAMILCO, CAPTAIN OF THE FIRST PRINCE'S GUARD...
...IS 11.9 METERS AWAY FROM THE TWO OF THEM!
RRRRMMM
ゴゴゴゴゴ
TRIANGLE LEG DEPTH 25 METERS, WIDTH 11.9 METERS.
TO ANGLE THE SHOT AT 26 DEGREES...
STEP
I NEED TO STEP 60 CM FORWARD.
THE BOY WHO SHOOTS THE ARROW: GRIMMEL THE DISSONANCE!
FIRE!!

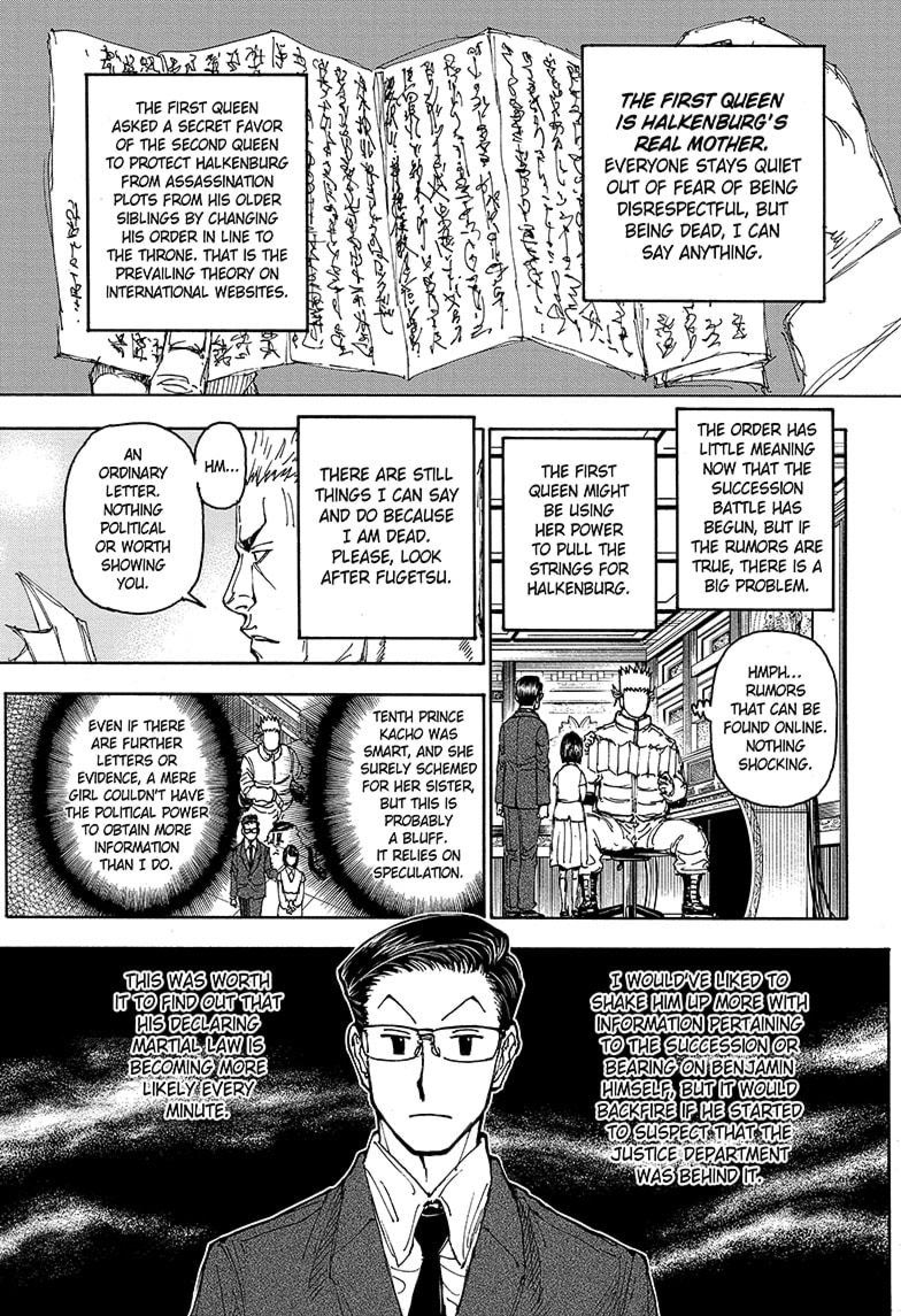

BLAMMM
1001
THE TRIAL HASN'T STARTED YET?
NO, BOTH SIDES REQUESTED A CHANGE TO THE START TIME.
BOTH? FOR WHAT REASONS?
THE PLAINTIFF WAS UNPREPARED DUE TO EQUIPMENT ISSUES, BUT THIS WAS DENIED BY THE JUDGE.
THE DEFENDANT HIMSELF WAS FEELING ILL, AND THIS WAS ACCEPTED. IT'LL START WHEN HE GETS BETTER.
WHAT'S GOING ON?!

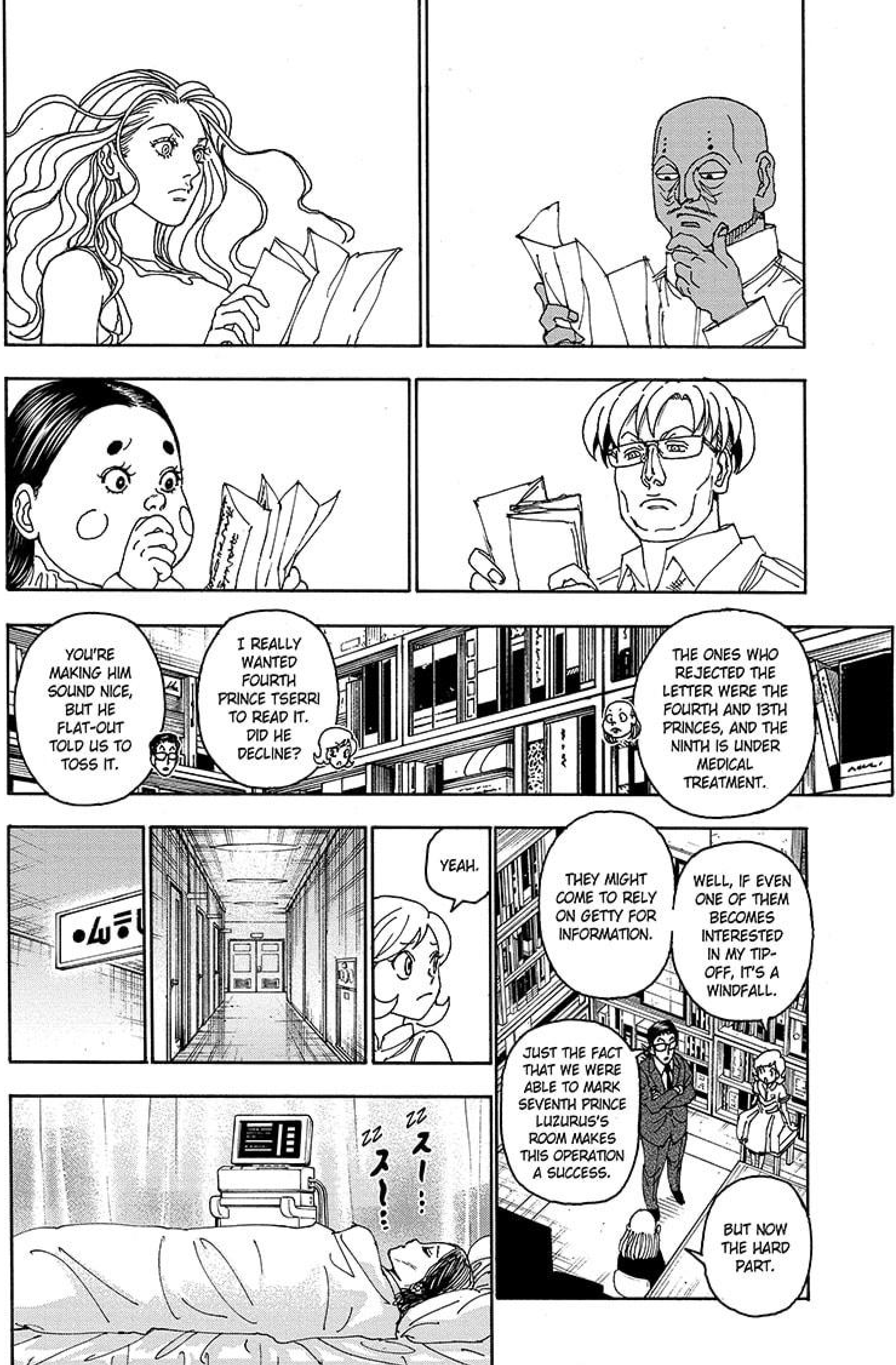

"EQUIPMENT ISSUES" IMPLY THE MISSION WASN'T EXECUTED? NO, HALKENBURG'S ABILITY WENT OFF FIRST! THE ONLY REASONABLE CONCLUSION IS THAT IT WAS DIRECTED AT BALSAMILCO.
IF BALSA WAS THE ONE ATTACKED, WHY DID HALKENBURG FALL ILL?!
HOW WAS HE ABLE TO USE HIS ABILITY BY HIMSELF ANYWAY?! THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
DID THEY GET TO *EACH OTHER*?! BALSA NOTICED HIS ABILITY AND CHARGED AT HIM TO SPRAY HIM WITH TSK-17?
BUT IT'S TOO EARLY FOR SYMPTOMS FROM TSK-17! THERE MUST BE ANOTHER REASON!!
TELL ME MORE ABOUT HALKENBURG'S CONDITION.
HE SUDDENLY FELT SICK AND COLLAPSED ON THE SPOT.
HE'S RESTING IN SICK BAY, IN STABLE CONDITION...
WAS ANYONE WITH HIM?
YES, A TEN OR SO OF HIS SUPPORTERS WHO WENT TO HIS AID.
A FEW ARE STILL WITH HIM AND TENDING TO HIM.
SO HIS *SUPPORTERS* ASSISTED IN HIS ABILITY!! WITH ENOUGH LOYALTY, IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT ORGANIZATION THEY BELONG TO.
OH!
FIRST PRINCE BENJAMIN! THE CAPTAIN IS HERE!
HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU. HOLD ON!!
HM ...
THIS HAS TO BE A TRAP! HALKENBURG'S ILLNESS IS FAKE!!
THE CAPTAIN WAS ATTACKED, AND IS NOT TALKING OF HIS OWN VOLITION.
THAT MEANS THIS IS A COERCIVE MANIPULATION ABILITY!!
WHEN IT HAPPENED TO SHIKAKU, BALSAMILCO SAID MANIPULATION IS "FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED." PERHAPS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, BUT IT DOESN'T APPLY AGAINST POWERFUL NEN FORMED BY A UNIFIED GROUP WORKING COLLECTIVELY.
WHAT WILL THE MANIPULATED CAPTAIN HAVE UP HIS SLEEVE?
YOUR HIGHNESS, THIS IS BALSAMILCO.
YES.
WHAT HAPPENED?
LET'S SEE WHAT YOU COME UP WITH.

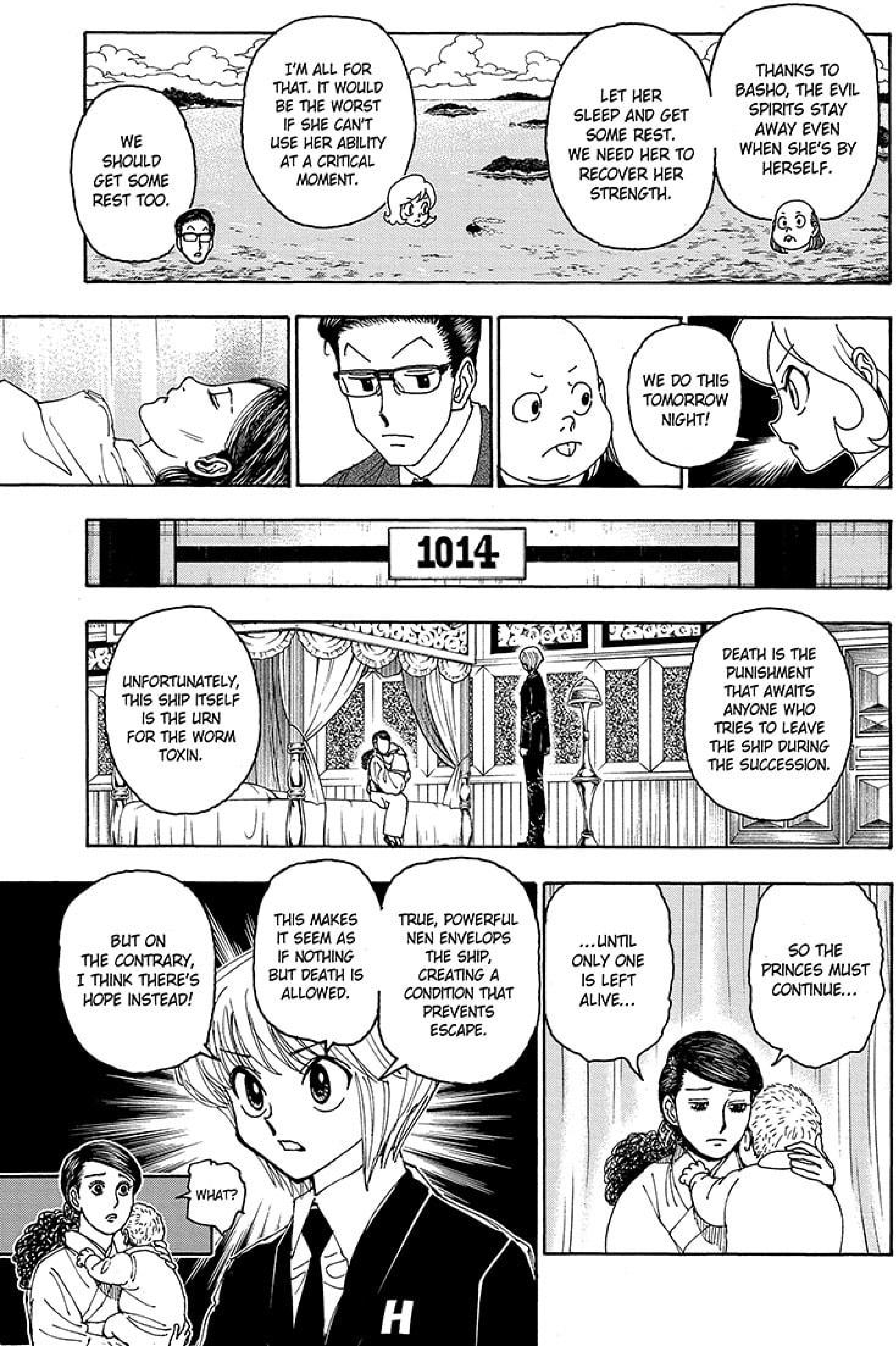

I HAVEN'T EXECUTED MY MISSION YET.
TROUBLE ON HALKENBURG'S SIDE, AND THE TRIAL WAS POSTPONED. DID YOU NOTICE THE RUMBLING EARLIER?
OF COURSE.
A NEN ARROW WAS FIRED AT ME, BUT IT MISSED. HALKENBURG LOST CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE SPOT.
PERHAPS BECAUSE HE USED HIS ABILITY MULTIPLE TIMES OVER A SHORT PERIOD, OR DUE TO THE STRAIN OF HAVING CIVILIANS HELP INSTEAD OF HIS PERSONAL GUARDS.
I SEE.
A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION, BUT HE'S OBVIOUSLY FAKING HIS ILLNESS TO POSTPONE THE TRIAL!!
SO THERE'S NO WAY TO KNOW WHEN THE TRIAL WILL RESUME...
BALSAMILCO, IF YOU TRY TO RETURN HERE WITHOUT EXECUTING YOUR MISSION, I WILL CONSIDER IT A COUP D'ÉTAT IN COLLUSION WITH HALKENBURG!!
I WILL INSTITUTE MARTIAL LAW AND PURGE BOTH OF YOU!!
NO... BUT THIS IS ACTUALLY OUR CHANCE! I WOULD LIKE PERMISSION TO GO SEE HALKENBURG.
A FEW OF HIS SUPPORTERS WILL PROBABLY BE BY HIS SIDE. IS THAT ALL RIGHT WITH YOU?
HE'S GOING TO DO THE DEED IN SICK BAY... OR PRETEND TO, AND USE THE TIME TO FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENTRAP ME?
YOU MAKE THE CALL... I ONLY WANT RESULTS!!
I UNDERSTAND... I'M ALSO AWARE THAT SINCE HALKENBURG'S ABILITY HAS BEEN USED, IT PUTS ME UNDER SUSPICION...
ERGO...
I WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL I CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT MY MISSION HAS BEEN COMPLETED... PLEASE LET MY MEN KNOW.

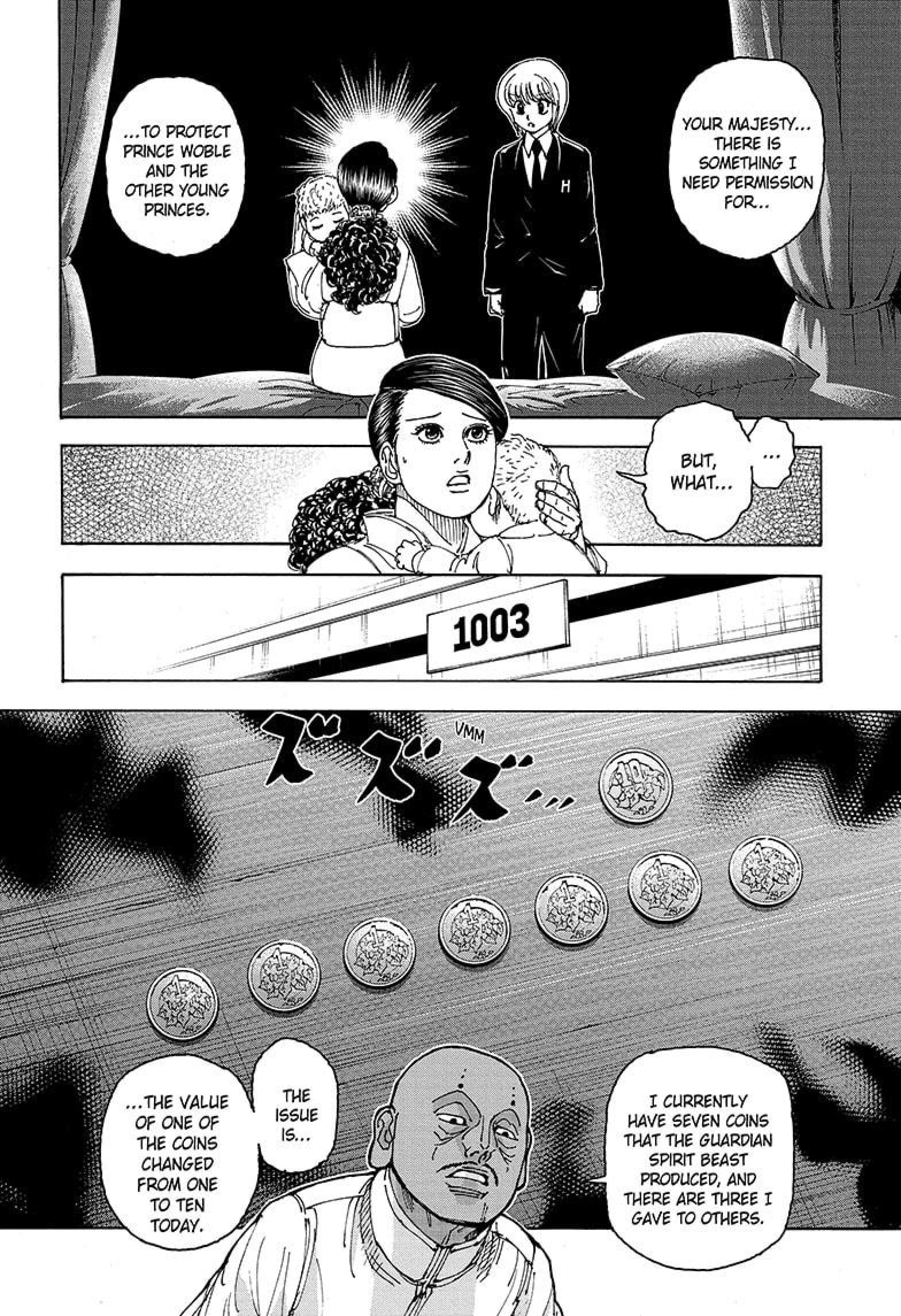

I WILL GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT WITHIN THE DAY.
DAY 11 (WEDNESDAY) 7:50 A.M.
...
COULD HE BE TELLING THE TRUTH?!
BUTCH!
SIR.
NO... HE'S SUSPECT UNTIL I CONFIRM HIS MISSION IS COMPLETED!! IT COULD ALL BE A TRAP TO BAIT US INTO INACTION!
THAT RUMBLING WAS AN ATTACK ON BALSAMILCO! UNTIL WE FIND OUT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER, WE ARE ON *RED ALERT*.
IF BALSAMILCO LEAVES THE JUSTICE BUREAU WITHOUT NOTIFYING US, I WILL DECLARE MARTIAL LAW! LET TIERS 2 AND 3 KNOW AT ONCE.
YES, SIR!
YOUR HIGHNESS!
AN OFFICIAL FROM THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND 11TH PRINCE FUGETSU HAVE SOMETHING TO PERSONALLY GIVE YOU.
THE SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ARE PEOPLE I'LL NEED TO WORK WITH DURING MY REIGN ONCE I'M KING...
LET THEM THROUGH!
IT WOULDN'T HURT TO FOSTER A GOOD RELATIONSHIP TO SHARE INFORMATION.

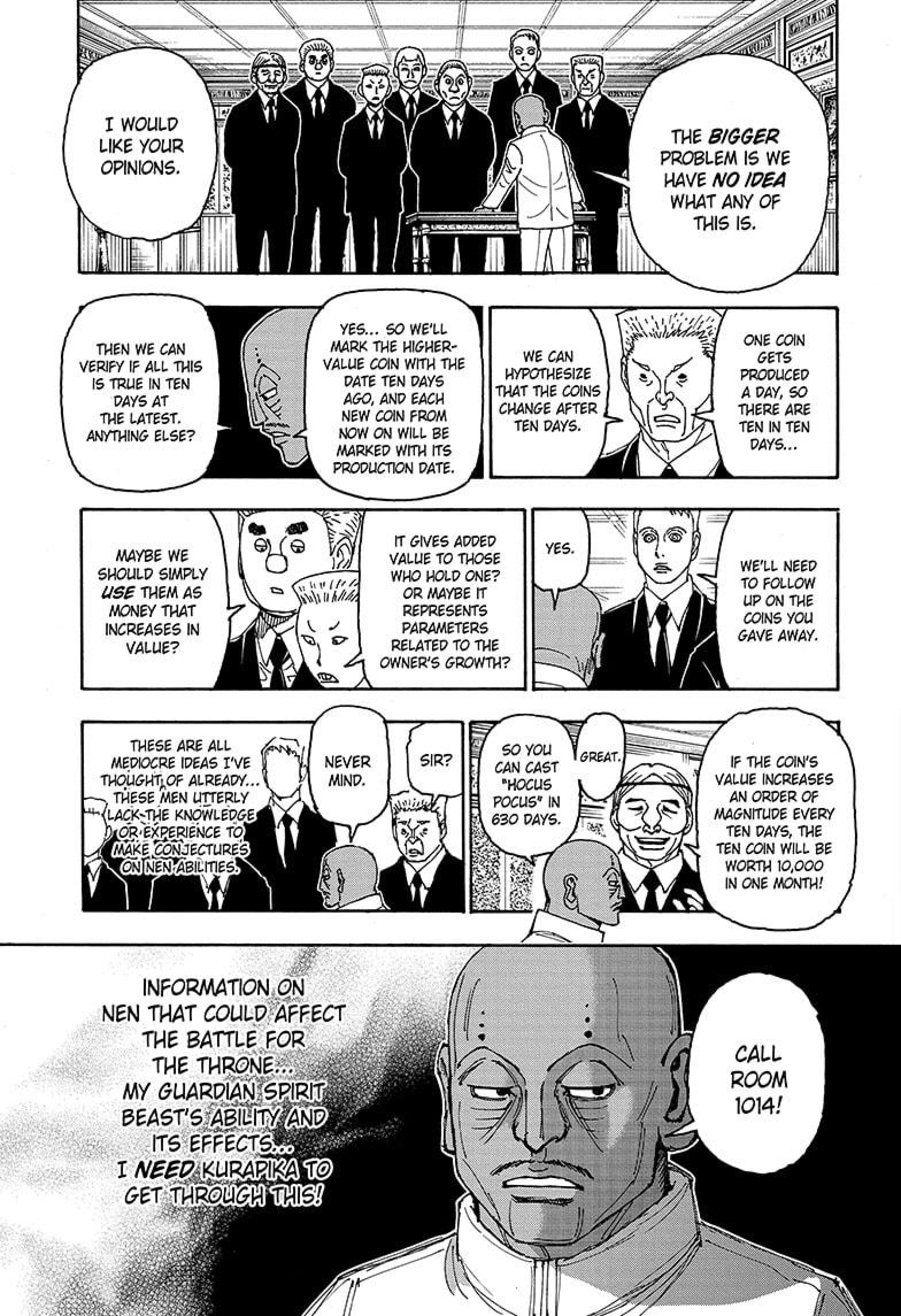

RRNG
RRNG
01
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT...
YES, THAT'S FINE!
THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE KIND OF CHOICE YOU WOULD MAKE... I SUPPORT IT.
I'M SORRY I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE YOU AT THE BANQUET...
BUT I'M PROUD OF YOU, HALKENBURG...
MY DEAR SON!

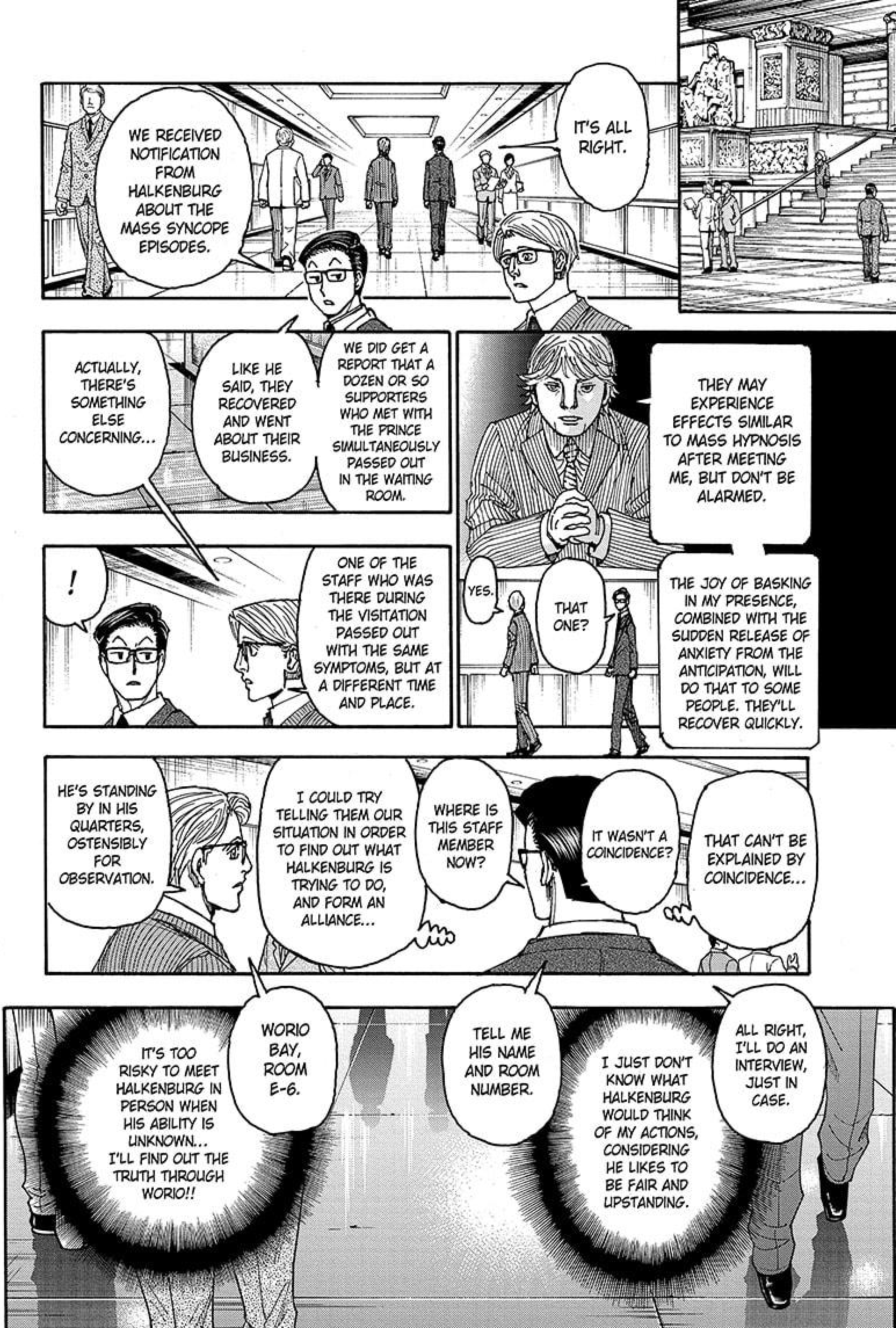

THE FIRST QUEEN ASKED A SECRET FAVOR OF THE SECOND QUEEN TO PROTECT HALKENBURG FROM ASSASSINATION PLOTS FROM HIS OLDER SIBLINGS BY CHANGING HIS ORDER IN LINE TO THE THRONE. THAT IS THE PREVAILING THEORY ON INTERNATIONAL WEBSITES.
THE FIRST QUEEN IS HALKENBURG'S REAL MOTHER. EVERYONE STAYS QUIET OUT OF FEAR OF BEING DISRESPECTFUL, BUT BEING DEAD, I CAN SAY ANYTHING.
THERE ARE STILL THINGS I CAN SAY AND DO BECAUSE I AM DEAD. PLEASE, LOOK AFTER FUGETSU.
HM...
AN ORDINARY LETTER. NOTHING POLITICAL OR WORTH SHOWING YOU.
THE FIRST QUEEN MIGHT BE USING HER POWER TO PULL THE STRINGS FOR HALKENBURG.
THE ORDER HAS LITTLE MEANING NOW THAT THE SUCCESSION BATTLE HAS BEGUN, BUT IF THE RUMORS ARE TRUE, THERE IS A BIG PROBLEM.
HMPH... RUMORS THAT CAN BE FOUND ONLINE. NOTHING SHOCKING.
TENTH PRINCE KACHO WAS SMART, AND SHE SURELY SCHEMED FOR HER SISTER, BUT THIS IS PROBABLY A BLUFF. IT RELIES ON SPECULATION.
EVEN IF THERE ARE FURTHER LETTERS OR EVIDENCE, A MERE GIRL COULDN'T HAVE THE POLITICAL POWER TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION THAN I DO.
THIS WAS WORTH IT TO FIND OUT THAT HIS DECLARING MARTIAL LAW IS BECOMING MORE LIKELY EVERY MINUTE.
I WOULD'VE LIKED TO SHAKE HIM UP MORE WITH INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE SUCCESSION OR BEARING ON BENJAMIN HIMSELF, BUT IT WOULD BACKFIRE IF HE STARTED TO SUSPECT THAT THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WAS BEHIND IT.

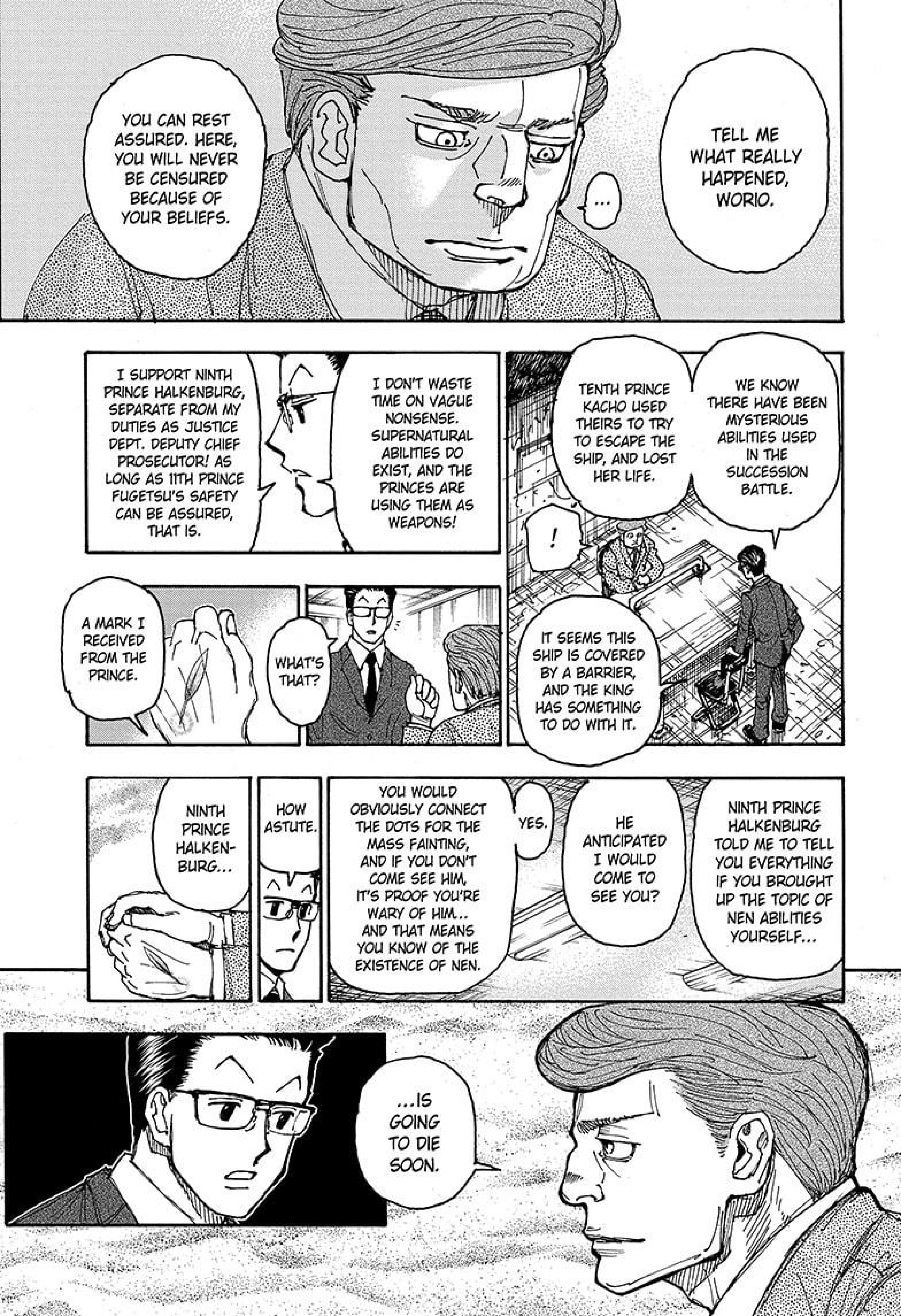

THE ONES WHO REJECTED THE LETTER WERE THE FOURTH AND 13TH PRINCES, AND THE NINTH IS UNDER MEDICAL TREATMENT.
I REALLY WANTED FOURTH PRINCE TSERRI TO READ IT. DID HE DECLINE?
YOU'RE MAKING HIM SOUND NICE, BUT HE FLAT-OUT TOLD US TO TOSS IT.
WELL, IF EVEN ONE OF THEM BECOMES INTERESTED IN MY TIP-OFF, IT'S A WINDFALL.
THEY MIGHT COME TO RELY ON GETTY FOR INFORMATION.
YEAH.
JUST THE FACT THAT WE WERE ABLE TO MARK SEVENTH PRINCE LUZURUS'S ROOM MAKES THIS OPERATION A SUCCESS.
BUT NOW THE HARD PART.
ZZ スー…
ZZ スー…

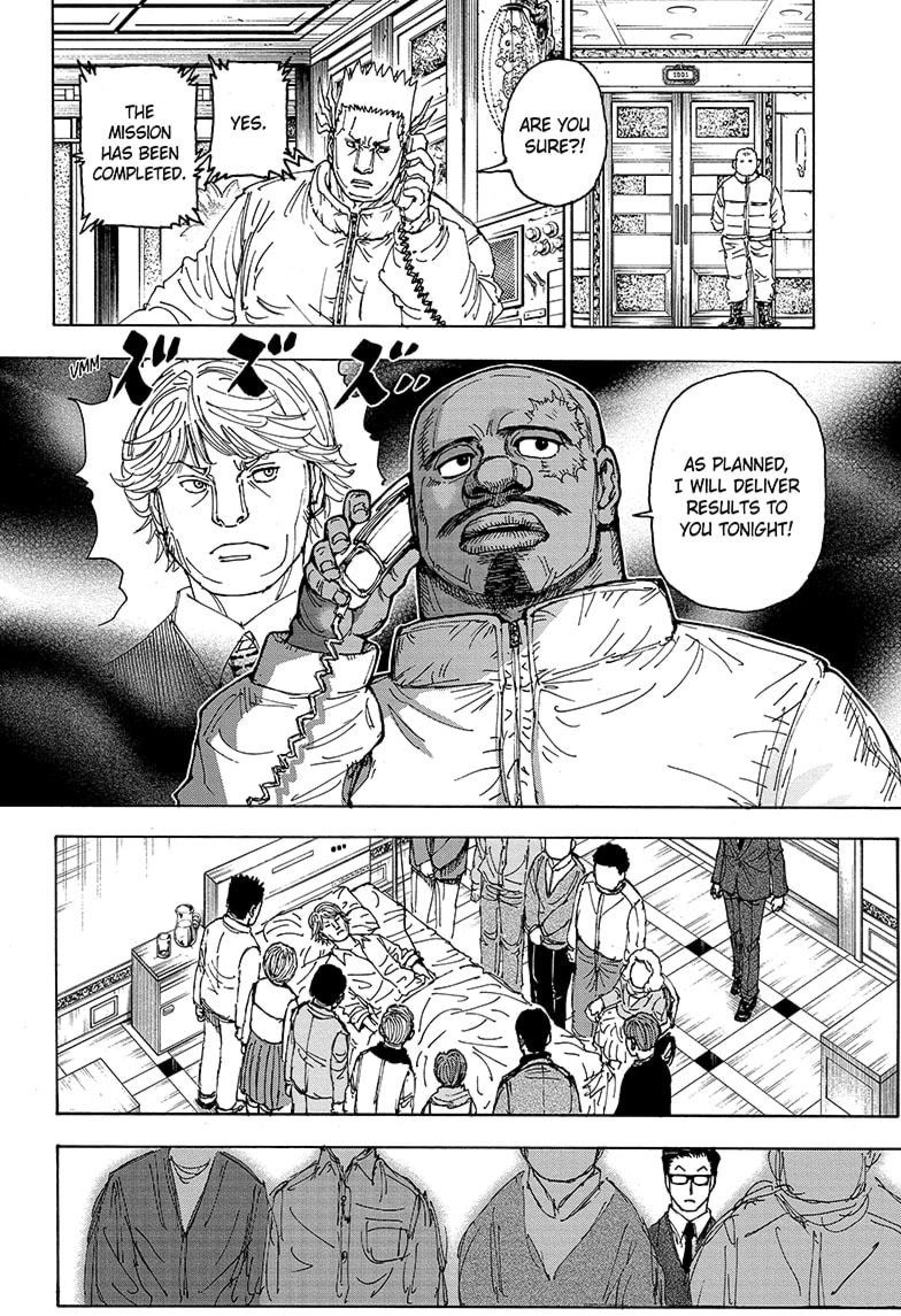

THANKS TO BASHO, THE EVIL SPIRITS STAY AWAY EVEN WHEN SHE'S BY HERSELF.
LET HER SLEEP AND GET SOME REST. WE NEED HER TO RECOVER HER STRENGTH.
I'M ALL FOR THAT. IT WOULD BE THE WORST IF SHE CAN'T USE HER ABILITY AT A CRITICAL MOMENT.
WE SHOULD GET SOME REST TOO.
WE DO THIS TOMORROW NIGHT!
1014
DEATH IS THE PUNISHMENT THAT AWAITS ANYONE WHO TRIES TO LEAVE THE SHIP DURING THE SUCCESSION.
UNFORTUNATELY, THIS SHIP ITSELF IS THE URN FOR THE WORM TOXIN.
SO THE PRINCES MUST CONTINUE...
...UNTIL ONLY ONE IS LEFT ALIVE...
TRUE, POWERFUL NEN ENVELOPS THE SHIP, CREATING A CONDITION THAT PREVENTS ESCAPE.
THIS MAKES IT SEEM AS IF NOTHING BUT DEATH IS ALLOWED.
BUT ON THE CONTRARY, I THINK THERE'S HOPE INSTEAD!
WHAT?

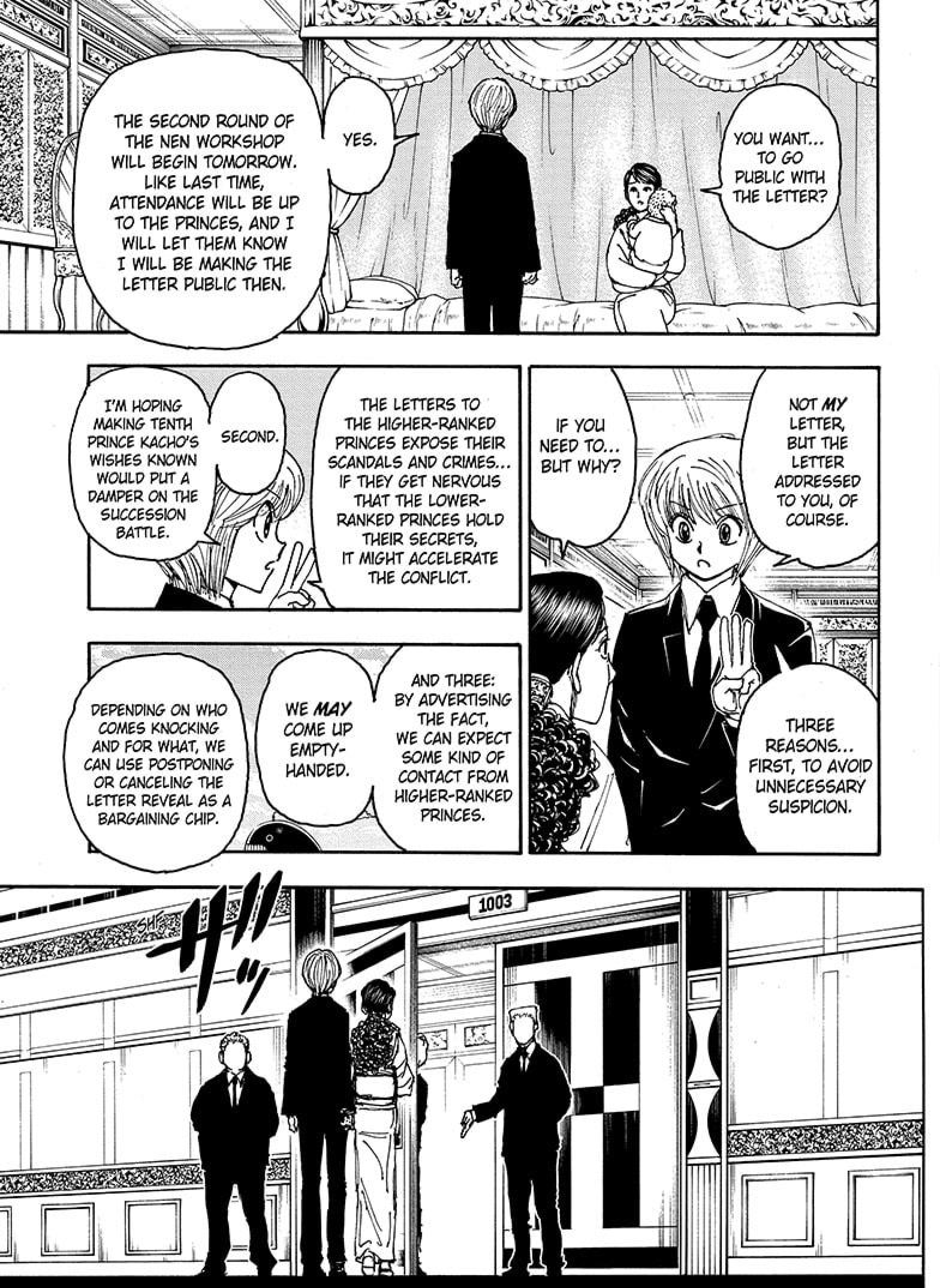

YOUR MAJESTY... THERE IS SOMETHING I NEED PERMISSION FOR...
...TO PROTECT PRINCE WOBLE AND THE OTHER YOUNG PRINCES.
...
BUT, WHAT...
1003
ズズズ...
VMM
I CURRENTLY HAVE SEVEN COINS THAT THE GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST PRODUCED, AND THERE ARE THREE I GAVE TO OTHERS.
THE ISSUE IS...
...THE VALUE OF ONE OF THE COINS CHANGED FROM ONE TO TEN TODAY.


THE *BIGGER* PROBLEM IS WE HAVE *NO IDEA* WHAT ANY OF THIS IS.
I WOULD LIKE YOUR OPINIONS.
ONE COIN GETS PRODUCED A DAY, SO THERE ARE TEN IN TEN DAYS...
WE CAN HYPOTHESIZE THAT THE COINS CHANGE AFTER TEN DAYS.
YES... SO WE'LL MARK THE HIGHER-VALUE COIN WITH THE DATE TEN DAYS AGO, AND EACH NEW COIN FROM NOW ON WILL BE MARKED WITH ITS PRODUCTION DATE.
THEN WE CAN VERIFY IF ALL THIS IS TRUE IN TEN DAYS AT THE LATEST. ANYTHING ELSE?
WE'LL NEED TO FOLLOW UP ON THE COINS YOU GAVE AWAY.
YES.
IT GIVES ADDED VALUE TO THOSE WHO HOLD ONE? OR MAYBE IT REPRESENTS PARAMETERS RELATED TO THE OWNER'S GROWTH?
MAYBE WE SHOULD SIMPLY *USE* THEM AS MONEY THAT INCREASES IN VALUE?
IF THE COIN'S VALUE INCREASES AN ORDER OF MAGNITUDE EVERY TEN DAYS, THE TEN COIN WILL BE WORTH 10,000 IN ONE MONTH!
GREAT.
SO YOU CAN CAST "HOCUS POCUS" IN 630 DAYS.
THESE ARE ALL MEDIOCRE IDEAS I'VE THOUGHT OF ALREADY... THESE MEN UTTERLY LACK THE KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE TO MAKE CONJECTURES ON NEN ABILITIES.
SIR?
NEVER MIND.
INFORMATION ON NEN THAT COULD AFFECT THE BATTLE FOR THE THRONE... MY GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST'S ABILITY AND ITS EFFECTS... I *NEED* KURAPIKA TO GET THROUGH THIS!
CALL ROOM 1014!


WE RECEIVED NOTIFICATION FROM HALKENBURG ABOUT THE MASS SYNCOPE EPISODES.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
THEY MAY EXPERIENCE EFFECTS SIMILAR TO MASS HYPNOSIS AFTER MEETING ME, BUT DON'T BE ALARMED.
THE JOY OF BASKING IN MY PRESENCE, COMBINED WITH THE SUDDEN RELEASE OF ANXIETY FROM THE ANTICIPATION, WILL DO THAT TO SOME PEOPLE. THEY'LL RECOVER QUICKLY.
THAT ONE?
YES.
WE DID GET A REPORT THAT A DOZEN OR SO SUPPORTERS WHO MET WITH THE PRINCE SIMULTANEOUSLY PASSED OUT IN THE WAITING ROOM.
LIKE HE SAID, THEY RECOVERED AND WENT ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS.
ACTUALLY, THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE CONCERNING...
ONE OF THE STAFF WHO WAS THERE DURING THE VISITATION PASSED OUT WITH THE SAME SYMPTOMS, BUT AT A DIFFERENT TIME AND PLACE.
!
THAT CAN'T BE EXPLAINED BY COINCIDENCE...
IT WASN'T A COINCIDENCE?
WHERE IS THIS STAFF MEMBER NOW?
I COULD TRY TELLING THEM OUR SITUATION IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHAT HALKENBURG IS TRYING TO DO, AND FORM AN ALLIANCE...
HE'S STANDING BY IN HIS QUARTERS, OSTENSIBLY FOR OBSERVATION.
ALL RIGHT, I'LL DO AN INTERVIEW, JUST IN CASE.
I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT HALKENBURG WOULD THINK OF MY ACTIONS, CONSIDERING HE LIKES TO BE FAIR AND UPSTANDING.
TELL ME HIS NAME AND ROOM NUMBER.
WORIO BAY, ROOM E-6.
IT'S TOO RISKY TO MEET HALKENBURG IN PERSON WHEN HIS ABILITY IS UNKNOWN... I'LL FIND OUT THE TRUTH THROUGH WORIO!!


TELL ME WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, WORIO.
…
YOU CAN REST ASSURED. HERE, YOU WILL NEVER BE CENSURED BECAUSE OF YOUR BELIEFS.
WE KNOW THERE HAVE BEEN MYSTERIOUS ABILITIES USED IN THE SUCCESSION BATTLE.
TENTH PRINCE KACHO USED THEIRS TO TRY TO ESCAPE THE SHIP, AND LOST HER LIFE.
!
IT SEEMS THIS SHIP IS COVERED BY A BARRIER, AND THE KING HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.
I DON'T WASTE TIME ON VAGUE NONSENSE. SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES DO EXIST, AND THE PRINCES ARE USING THEM AS WEAPONS!
I SUPPORT NINTH PRINCE HALKENBURG, SEPARATE FROM MY DUTIES AS JUSTICE DEPT. DEPUTY CHIEF PROSECUTOR! AS LONG AS 11TH PRINCE FUGETSU'S SAFETY CAN BE ASSURED, THAT IS.
WHAT'S THAT?
A MARK I RECEIVED FROM THE PRINCE.
NINTH PRINCE HALKENBURG TOLD ME TO TELL YOU EVERYTHING IF YOU BROUGHT UP THE TOPIC OF NEN ABILITIES YOURSELF…
HE ANTICIPATED I WOULD COME TO SEE YOU?
YES.
YOU WOULD OBVIOUSLY CONNECT THE DOTS FOR THE MASS FAINTING, AND IF YOU DON'T COME SEE HIM, IT'S PROOF YOU'RE WARY OF HIM.. AND THAT MEANS YOU KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF NEN.
HOW ASTUTE.
NINTH PRINCE HALKEN-BURG…
…IS GOING TO DIE SOON.


ARE YOU SURE?!
YES.
THE MISSION HAS BEEN COMPLETED.
AS PLANNED, I WILL DELIVER RESULTS TO YOU TONIGHT!
ズズズ
VMM

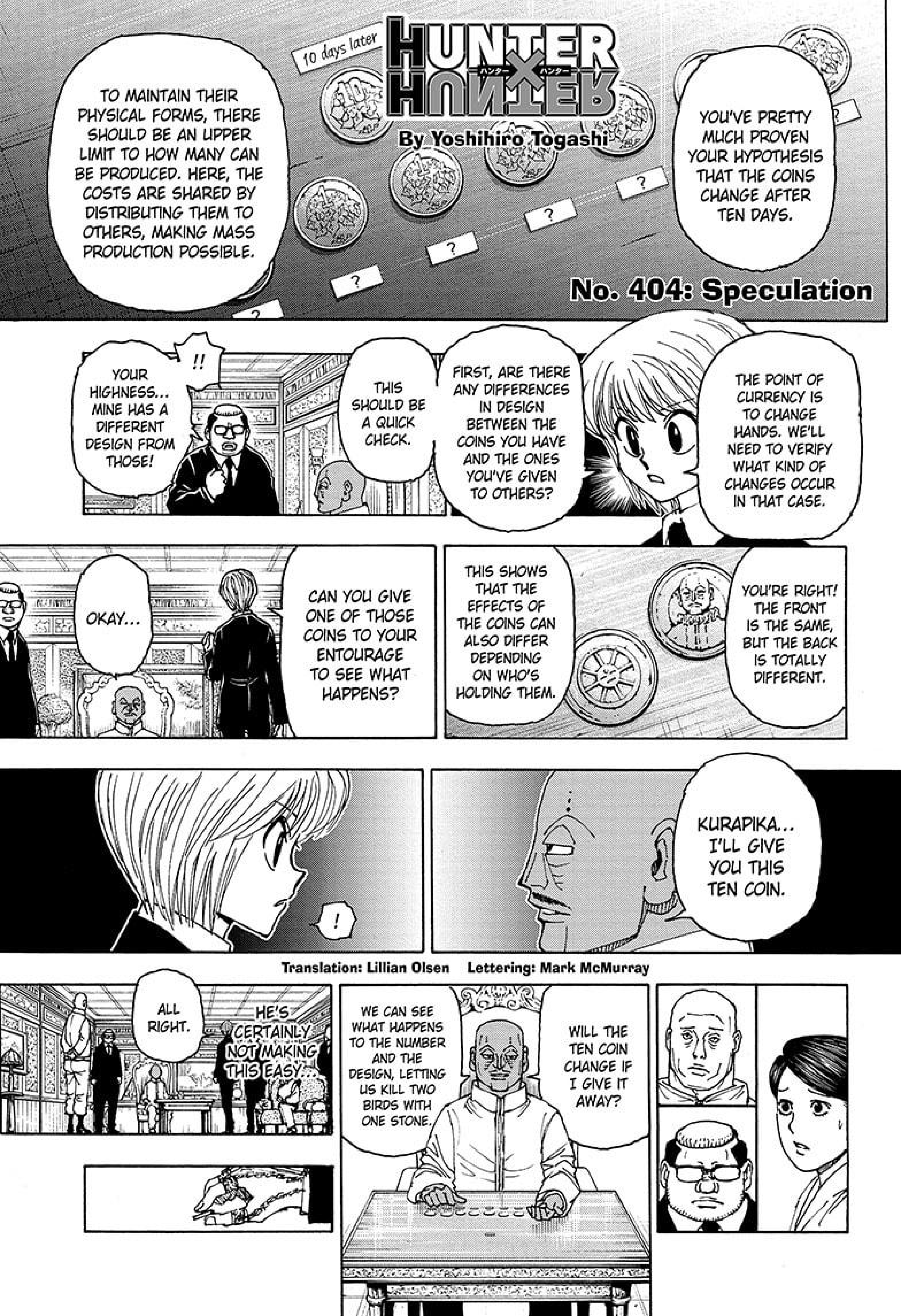

YOU WANT... TO GO PUBLIC WITH THE LETTER?
YES.
THE SECOND ROUND OF THE NEN WORKSHOP WILL BEGIN TOMORROW. LIKE LAST TIME, ATTENDANCE WILL BE UP TO THE PRINCES, AND I WILL LET THEM KNOW I WILL BE MAKING THE LETTER PUBLIC THEN.
NOT *MY* LETTER, BUT THE LETTER ADDRESSED TO YOU, OF COURSE.
IF YOU NEED TO... BUT WHY?
THREE REASONS... FIRST, TO AVOID UNNECESSARY SUSPICION.
THE LETTERS TO THE HIGHER-RANKED PRINCES EXPOSE THEIR SCANDALS AND CRIMES... IF THEY GET NERVOUS THAT THE LOWER-RANKED PRINCES HOLD THEIR SECRETS, IT MIGHT ACCELERATE THE CONFLICT.
SECOND.
I'M HOPING MAKING TENTH PRINCE KACHO'S WISHES KNOWN WOULD PUT A DAMPER ON THE SUCCESSION BATTLE.
AND THREE: BY ADVERTISING THE FACT, WE CAN EXPECT SOME KIND OF CONTACT FROM HIGHER-RANKED PRINCES.
WE *MAY* COME UP EMPTY-HANDED.
DEPENDING ON WHO COMES KNOCKING AND FOR WHAT, WE CAN USE POSTPONING OR CANCELING THE LETTER REVEAL AS A BARGAINING CHIP.
SHF
1003

To be continued!

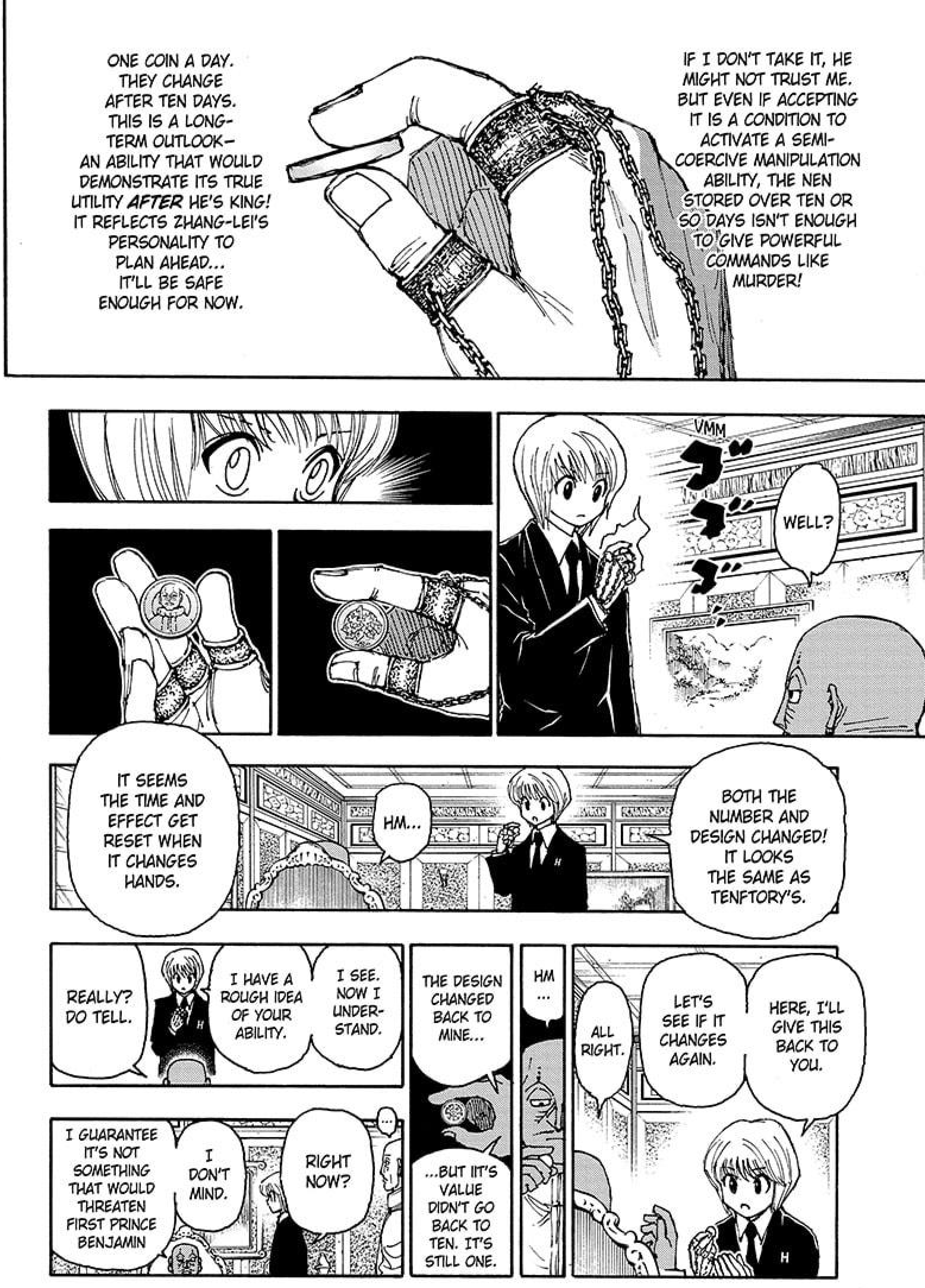
HUNTER×HUNTER

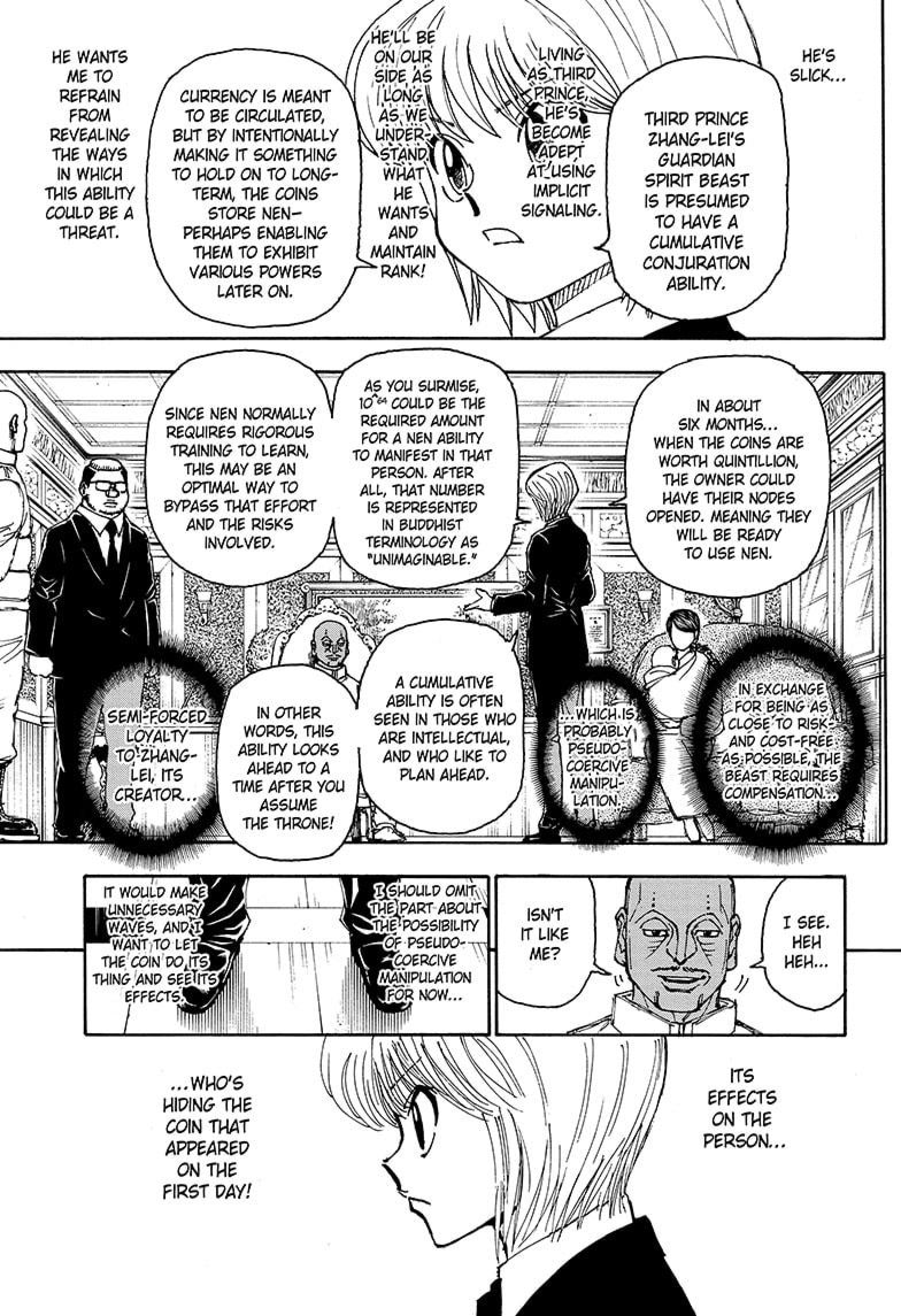
By Yoshihiro Togashi

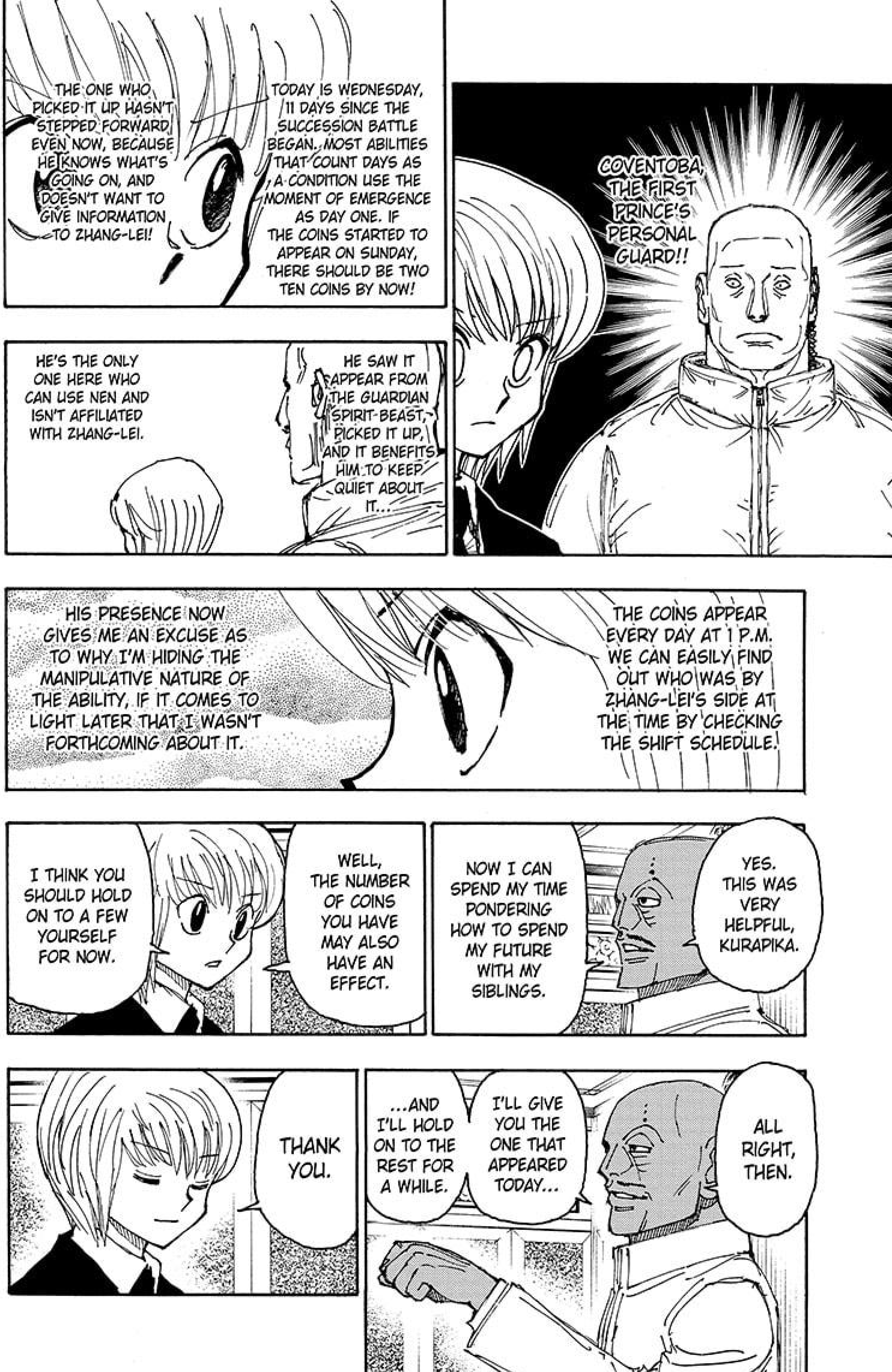
No. 404: Speculation

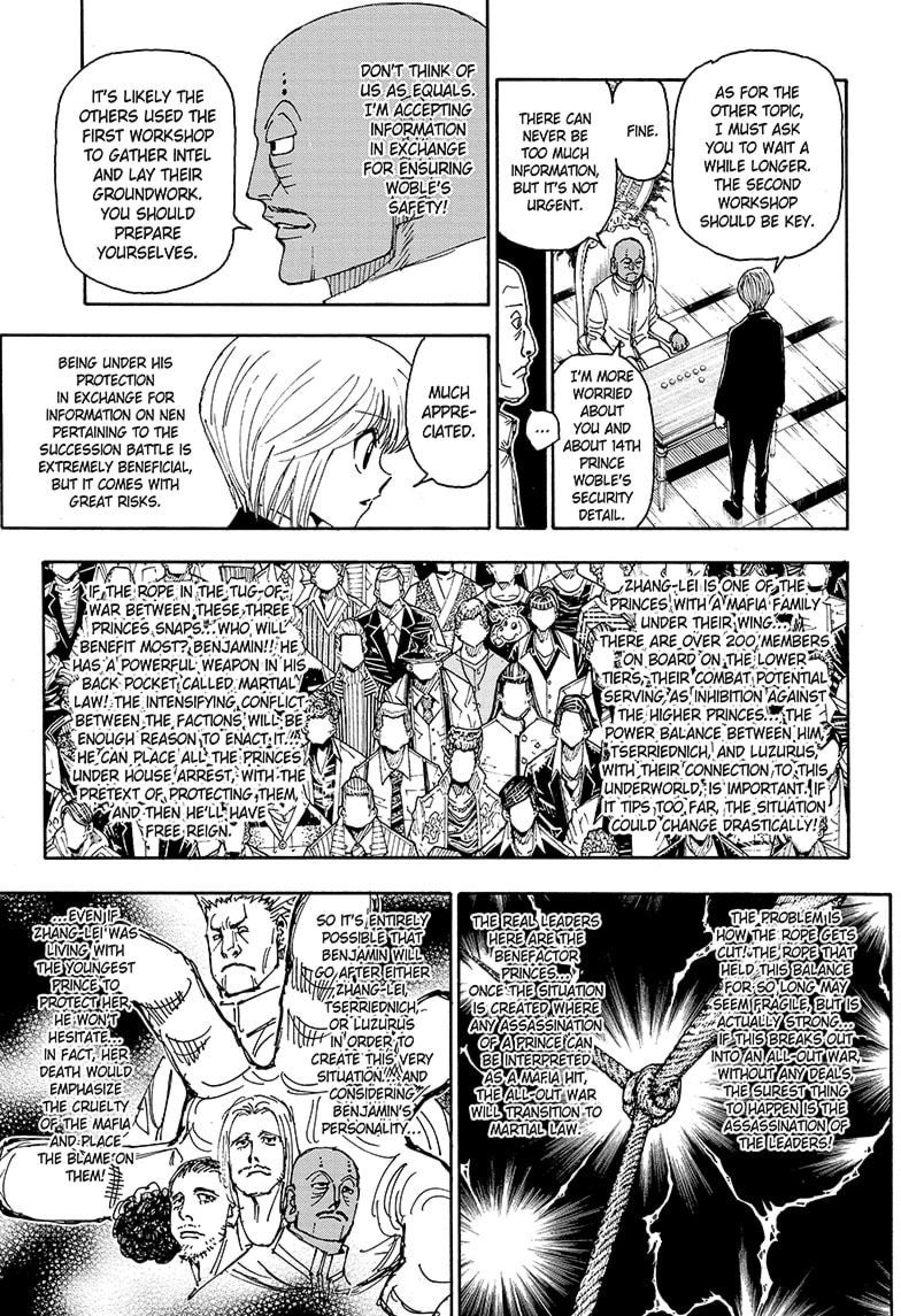

10 days later
YOU'VE PRETTY MUCH PROVEN YOUR HYPOTHESIS THAT THE COINS CHANGE AFTER TEN DAYS.
TO MAINTAIN THEIR PHYSICAL FORMS, THERE SHOULD BE AN UPPER LIMIT TO HOW MANY CAN BE PRODUCED. HERE, THE COSTS ARE SHARED BY DISTRIBUTING THEM TO OTHERS, MAKING MASS PRODUCTION POSSIBLE.
?
?
?
?
?
?
THE POINT OF CURRENCY IS TO CHANGE HANDS. WE'LL NEED TO VERIFY WHAT KIND OF CHANGES OCCUR IN THAT CASE.
FIRST, ARE THERE ANY DIFFERENCES IN DESIGN BETWEEN THE COINS YOU HAVE AND THE ONES YOU'VE GIVEN TO OTHERS?
THIS SHOULD BE A QUICK CHECK.
!!
YOUR HIGHNESS... MINE HAS A DIFFERENT DESIGN FROM THOSE!
YOU'RE RIGHT! THE FRONT IS THE SAME, BUT THE BACK IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT.
THIS SHOWS THAT THE EFFECTS OF THE COINS CAN ALSO DIFFER DEPENDING ON WHO'S HOLDING THEM.
CAN YOU GIVE ONE OF THOSE COINS TO YOUR ENTOURAGE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS?
OKAY...
KURAPIKA... I'LL GIVE YOU THIS TEN COIN.
!
WILL THE TEN COIN CHANGE IF I GIVE IT AWAY?
WE CAN SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THE NUMBER AND THE DESIGN, LETTING US KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.
HE'S CERTAINLY NOT MAKING THIS EASY...
ALL RIGHT.

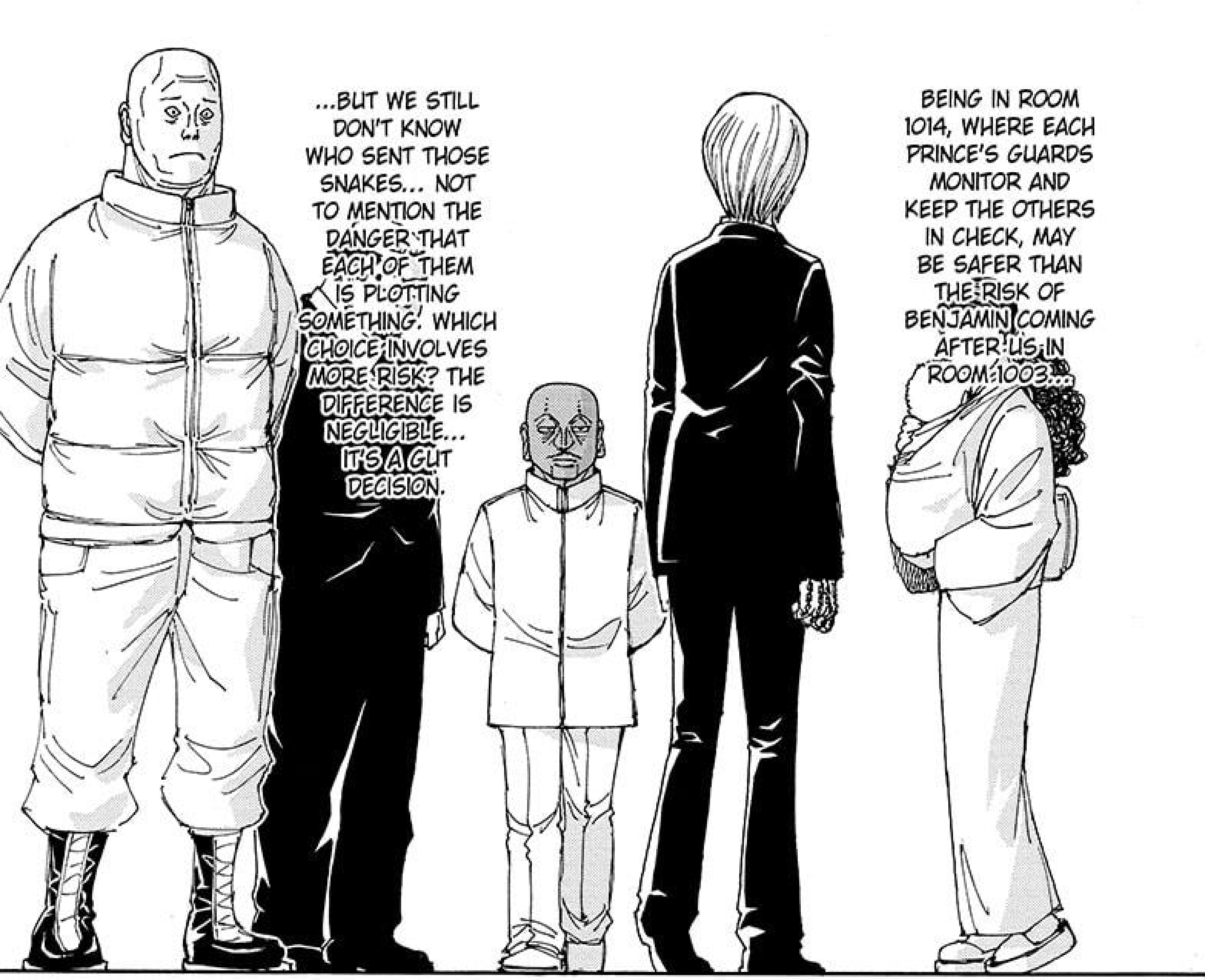
Translation: Lillian Olsen Lettering: Mark McMurray

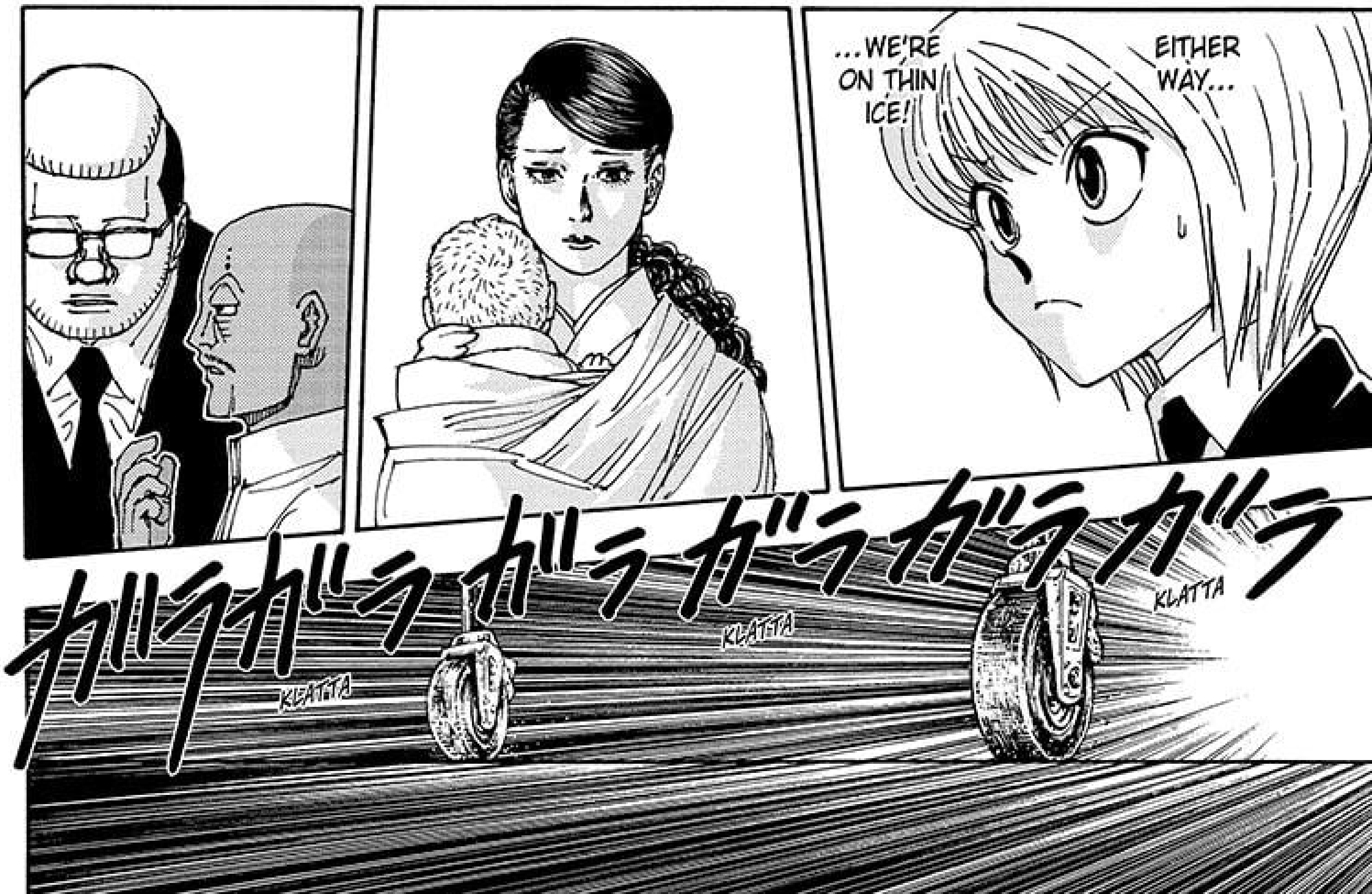

IF I DON'T TAKE IT, HE MIGHT NOT TRUST ME. BUT EVEN IF ACCEPTING IT IS A CONDITION TO ACTIVATE A SEMI-COERCIVE MANIPULATION ABILITY, THE NEN STORED OVER TEN OR SO DAYS ISN'T ENOUGH TO GIVE POWERFUL COMMANDS LIKE MURDER!
ONE COIN A DAY. THEY CHANGE AFTER TEN DAYS. THIS IS A LONG-TERM OUTLOOK— AN ABILITY THAT WOULD DEMONSTRATE ITS TRUE UTILITY *AFTER* HE'S KING! IT REFLECTS ZHANG-LEI'S PERSONALITY TO PLAN AHEAD... IT'LL BE SAFE ENOUGH FOR NOW.
VMM
WELL?
BOTH THE NUMBER AND DESIGN CHANGED! IT LOOKS THE SAME AS TENFTORY'S.
HM...
IT SEEMS THE TIME AND EFFECT GET RESET WHEN IT CHANGES HANDS.
HERE, I'LL GIVE THIS BACK TO YOU.
LET'S SEE IF IT CHANGES AGAIN.
ALL RIGHT.
HM ...
THE DESIGN CHANGED BACK TO MINE...
...BUT IIT'S VALUE DIDN'T GO BACK TO TEN. IT'S STILL ONE.
I SEE. NOW I UNDER-STAND.
I HAVE A ROUGH IDEA OF YOUR ABILITY.
REALLY? DO TELL.
...
RIGHT NOW?
I DON'T MIND.
I GUARANTEE IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT WOULD THREATEN FIRST PRINCE BENJAMIN


HE'S SLICK...
THIRD PRINCE ZHANG-LEI'S GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST IS PRESUMED TO HAVE A CUMULATIVE CONJURATION ABILITY.
LIVING AS THIRD PRINCE, HE'S BECOME ADEPT AT USING IMPLICIT SIGNALING.
HE'LL BE ON OUR SIDE AS LONG AS WE UNDERSTAND WHAT HE WANTS AND MAINTAIN RANK!
CURRENCY IS MEANT TO BE CIRCULATED, BUT BY INTENTIONALLY MAKING IT SOMETHING TO HOLD ON TO LONG-TERM, THE COINS STORE NEN—PERHAPS ENABLING THEM TO EXHIBIT VARIOUS POWERS LATER ON.
HE WANTS ME TO REFRAIN FROM REVEALING THE WAYS IN WHICH THIS ABILITY COULD BE A THREAT.
IN ABOUT SIX MONTHS... WHEN THE COINS ARE WORTH QUINTILLION, THE OWNER COULD HAVE THEIR NODES OPENED. MEANING THEY WILL BE READY TO USE NEN.
AS YOU SURMISE, 10^{64} COULD BE THE REQUIRED AMOUNT FOR A NEN ABILITY TO MANIFEST IN THAT PERSON. AFTER ALL, THAT NUMBER IS REPRESENTED IN BUDDHIST TERMINOLOGY AS "UNIMAGINABLE."
SINCE NEN NORMALLY REQUIRES RIGOROUS TRAINING TO LEARN, THIS MAY BE AN OPTIMAL WAY TO BYPASS THAT EFFORT AND THE RISKS INVOLVED.
IN EXCHANGE FOR BEING AS CLOSE TO RISK AND COST-FREE AS POSSIBLE, THE BEAST REQUIRES COMPENSATION...
...WHICH IS PROBABLY PSEUDO-COERCIVE MANIPULATION.
A CUMULATIVE ABILITY IS OFTEN SEEN IN THOSE WHO ARE INTELLECTUAL, AND WHO LIKE TO PLAN AHEAD.
IN OTHER WORDS, THIS ABILITY LOOKS AHEAD TO A TIME AFTER YOU ASSUME THE THRONE!
SEMI-FORCED LOYALTY TO ZHANG-LEI, ITS CREATOR...
I SEE. HEH HEH...
ISN'T IT LIKE ME?
I SHOULD OMIT THE PART ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PSEUDO-COERCIVE MANIPULATION FOR NOW...
IT WOULD MAKE UNNECESSARY WAVES, AND I WANT TO LET THE COIN DO ITS THING AND SEE ITS EFFECTS.
ITS EFFECTS ON THE PERSON...
...WHO'S HIDING THE COIN THAT APPEARED ON THE FIRST DAY!


TODAY IS WEDNESDAY, 11 DAYS SINCE THE SUCCESSION BATTLE BEGAN. MOST ABILITIES THAT COUNT DAYS AS A CONDITION USE THE MOMENT OF EMERGENCE AS DAY ONE. IF THE COINS STARTED TO APPEAR ON SUNDAY, THERE SHOULD BE TWO TEN COINS BY NOW!
THE ONE WHO PICKED IT UP HASN'T STEPPED FORWARD EVEN NOW, BECAUSE HE KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON, AND DOESN'T WANT TO GIVE INFORMATION TO ZHANG-LEI!
COVENTOBA, THE FIRST PRINCE'S PERSONAL GUARD!!
HE SAW IT APPEAR FROM THE GUARDIAN SPIRIT-BEAST, PICKED IT UP, AND IT BENEFITS HIM TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT IT...
HE'S THE ONLY ONE HERE WHO CAN USE NEN AND ISN'T AFFILIATED WITH ZHANG-LEI.
THE COINS APPEAR EVERY DAY AT 1 P.M. WE CAN EASILY FIND OUT WHO WAS BY ZHANG-LEI'S SIDE AT THE TIME BY CHECKING THE SHIFT SCHEDULE.
HIS PRESENCE NOW GIVES ME AN EXCUSE AS TO WHY I'M HIDING THE MANIPULATIVE NATURE OF THE ABILITY, IF IT COMES TO LIGHT LATER THAT I WASN'T FORTHCOMING ABOUT IT.
YES. THIS WAS VERY HELPFUL, KURAPIKA.
NOW I CAN SPEND MY TIME PONDERING HOW TO SPEND MY FUTURE WITH MY SIBLINGS.
WELL, THE NUMBER OF COINS YOU HAVE MAY ALSO HAVE AN EFFECT.
I THINK YOU SHOULD HOLD ON TO A FEW YOURSELF FOR NOW.
ALL RIGHT, THEN.
I'LL GIVE YOU THE ONE THAT APPEARED TODAY...
...AND I'LL HOLD ON TO THE REST FOR A WHILE.
THANK YOU.


AS FOR THE OTHER TOPIC, I MUST ASK YOU TO WAIT A WHILE LONGER. THE SECOND WORKSHOP SHOULD BE KEY.
FINE.
THERE CAN NEVER BE TOO MUCH INFORMATION, BUT IT'S NOT URGENT.
I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT YOU AND ABOUT 14TH PRINCE WOBLE'S SECURITY DETAIL.
...
DON'T THINK OF US AS EQUALS. I'M ACCEPTING INFORMATION IN EXCHANGE FOR ENSURING WOBLE'S SAFETY!
IT'S LIKELY THE OTHERS USED THE FIRST WORKSHOP TO GATHER INTEL AND LAY THEIR GROUNDWORK. YOU SHOULD PREPARE YOURSELVES.
MUCH APPRECIATED.
BEING UNDER HIS PROTECTION IN EXCHANGE FOR INFORMATION ON NEN PERTAINING TO THE SUCCESSION BATTLE IS EXTREMELY BENEFICIAL, BUT IT COMES WITH GREAT RISKS.
ZHANG-LEI IS ONE OF THE PRINCES WITH A MAFIA FAMILY UNDER THEIR WING... THERE ARE OVER 200 MEMBERS ON BOARD ON THE LOWER TIERS, THEIR COMBAT POTENTIAL SERVING AS INHIBITION AGAINST THE HIGHER PRINCES... THE POWER BALANCE BETWEEN HIM, TSERRIEDNICH, AND LUZURUS, WITH THEIR CONNECTION TO THIS UNDERWORLD, IS IMPORTANT. IF IT TIPS TOO FAR, THE SITUATION COULD CHANGE DRASTICALLY!
IF THE ROPE IN THE TUG-OF-WAR BETWEEN THESE THREE PRINCES SNAPS... WHO WILL BENEFIT MOST? BENJAMIN!! HE HAS A POWERFUL WEAPON IN HIS BACK POCKET CALLED MARTIAL LAW! THE INTENSIFYING CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FACTIONS WILL BE ENOUGH REASON TO ENACT IT... HE CAN PLACE ALL THE PRINCES UNDER HOUSE ARREST, WITH THE PRETEXT OF PROTECTING THEM, AND THEN HE'LL HAVE FREE REIGN.
THE PROBLEM IS HOW THE ROPE GETS CUT! THE ROPE THAT HELD THIS BALANCE FOR SO LONG MAY SEEM FRAGILE, BUT IS ACTUALLY STRONG... IF THIS BREAKS OUT INTO AN ALL-OUT WAR, WITHOUT ANY DEALS, THE SUREST THING TO HAPPEN IS THE ASSASSINATION OF THE LEADERS!
THE REAL LEADERS HERE ARE THE BENEFACTOR PRINCES... ONCE THE SITUATION IS CREATED WHERE ANY ASSASSINATION OF A PRINCE CAN BE INTERPRETED AS A MAFIA HIT, THE ALL-OUT WAR WILL TRANSITION TO MARTIAL LAW.
SO IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT BENJAMIN WILL GO AFTER EITHER ZHANG-LEI, TSERRIEDNICH, OR LUZURUS IN ORDER TO CREATE THIS VERY SITUATION... AND CONSIDERING BENJAMIN'S PERSONALITY...
...EVEN IF ZHANG-LEI WAS LIVING WITH THE YOUNGEST PRINCE TO PROTECT HER, HE WON'T HESITATE... IN FACT, HER DEATH WOULD EMPHASIZE THE CRUELTY OF THE MAFIA AND PLACE THE BLAME ON THEM!


BEING IN ROOM 1014, WHERE EACH PRINCE'S GUARDS MONITOR AND KEEP THE OTHERS IN CHECK, MAY BE SAFER THAN THE RISK OF BENJAMIN COMING AFTER US IN ROOM 1003...
...BUT WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHO SENT THOSE SNAKES... NOT TO MENTION THE DANGER THAT EACH OF THEM IS PLOTTING SOMETHING. WHICH CHOICE INVOLVES MORE RISK? THE DIFFERENCE IS NEGLIGIBLE... IT'S A GUT DECISION.


EITHER WAY...
...WE'RE ON THIN ICE!
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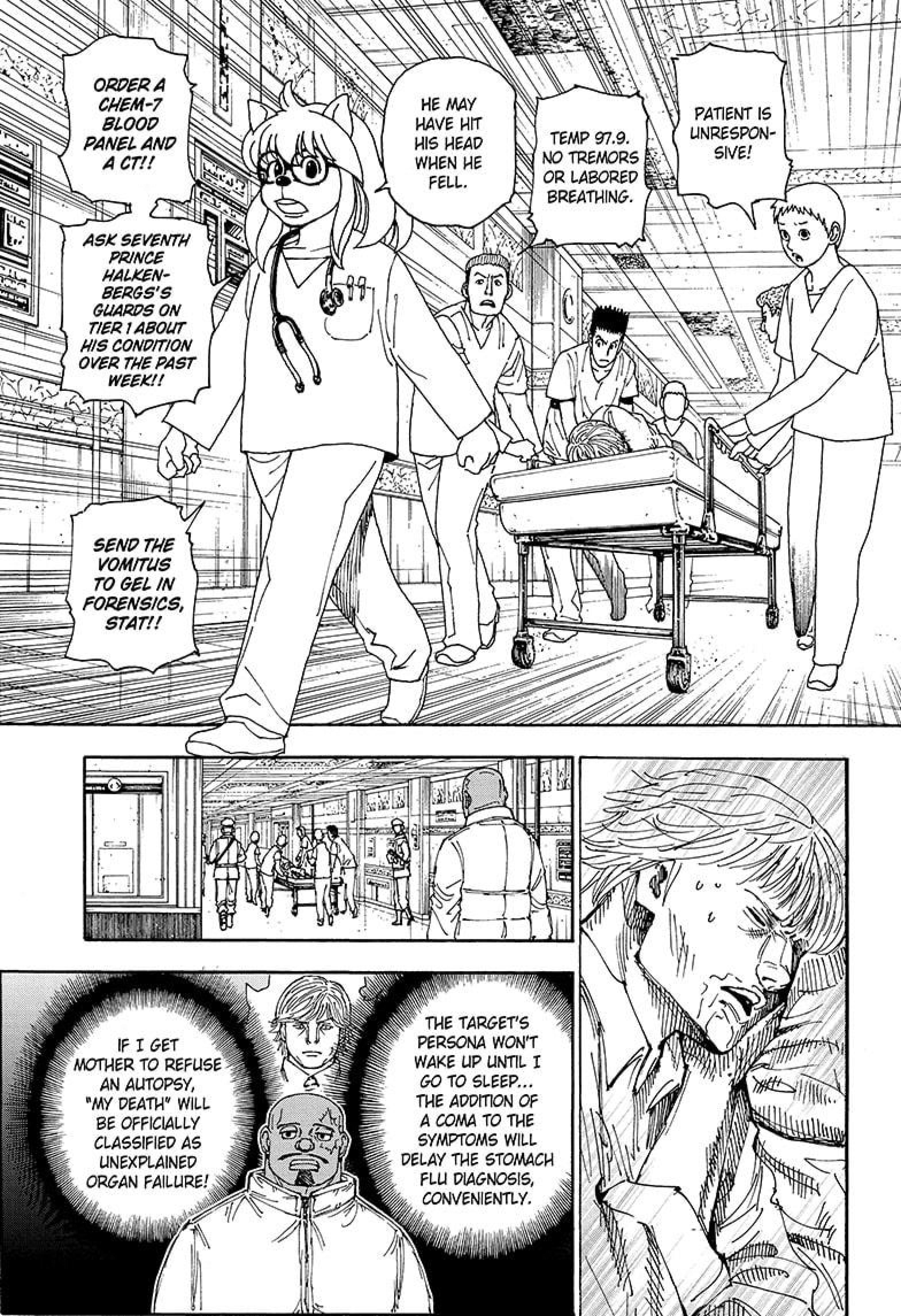
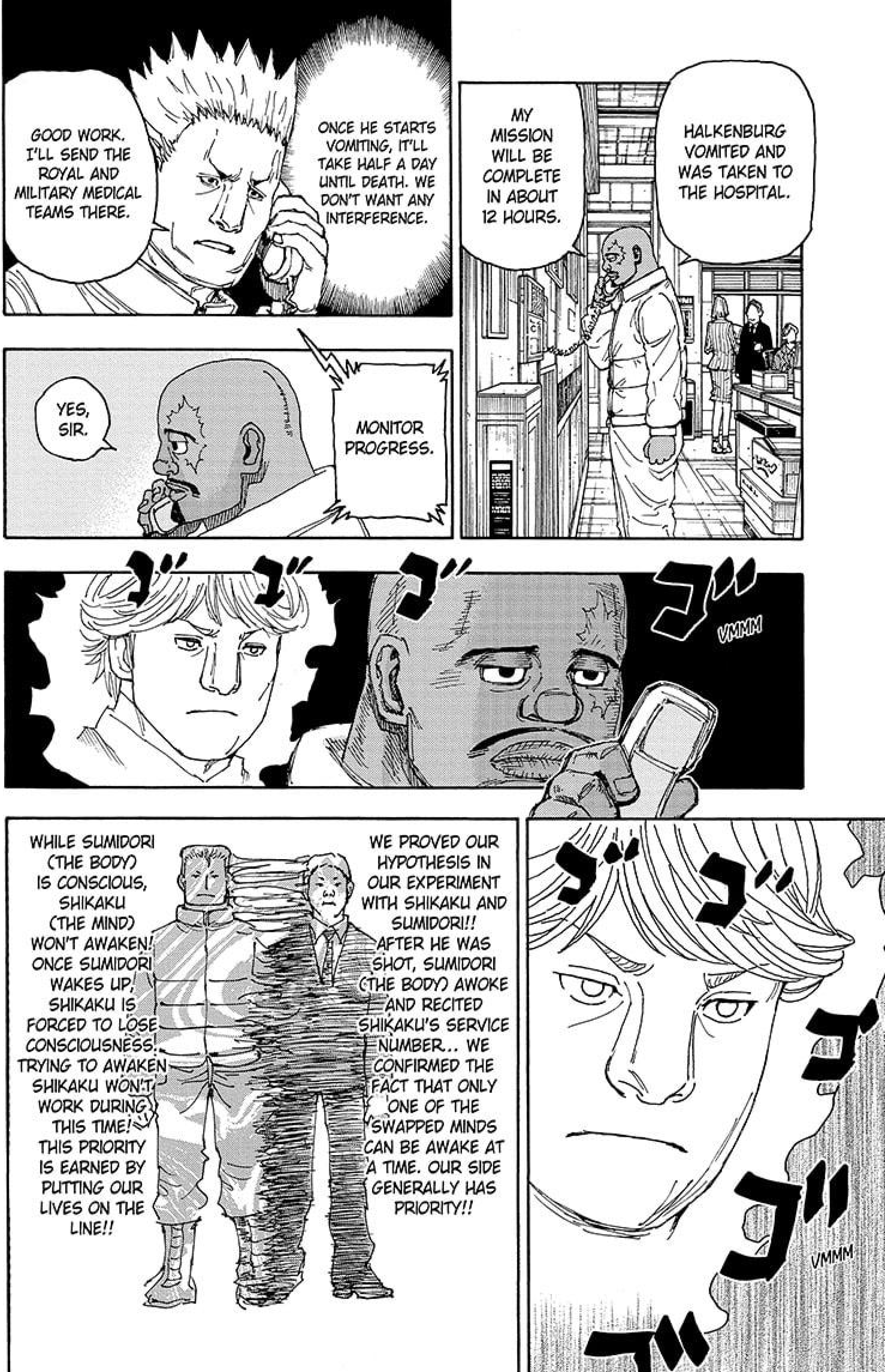
KLATTA
KLATTA
KLATTA


PATIENT IS UNRESPONSIVE!
TEMP 97.9. NO TREMORS OR LABORED BREATHING.
HE MAY HAVE HIT HIS HEAD WHEN HE FELL.
ORDER A CHEM-7 BLOOD PANEL AND A CT!!
ASK SEVENTH PRINCE HALKENBERGS'S GUARDS ON TIER 1 ABOUT HIS CONDITION OVER THE PAST WEEK!!
SEND THE VOMITUS TO GEL IN FORENSICS, STAT!!
THE TARGET'S PERSONA WON'T WAKE UP UNTIL I GO TO SLEEP... THE ADDITION OF A COMA TO THE SYMPTOMS WILL DELAY THE STOMACH FLU DIAGNOSIS, CONVENIENTLY.
IF I GET MOTHER TO REFUSE AN AUTOPSY, "MY DEATH" WILL BE OFFICIALLY CLASSIFIED AS UNEXPLAINED ORGAN FAILURE!


HALKENBURG VOMITED AND WAS TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL.
MY MISSION WILL BE COMPLETE IN ABOUT 12 HOURS.
ONCE HE STARTS VOMITING, IT'LL TAKE HALF A DAY UNTIL DEATH. WE DON'T WANT ANY INTERFERENCE.
GOOD WORK. I'LL SEND THE ROYAL AND MILITARY MEDICAL TEAMS THERE.
MONITOR PROGRESS.
YES, SIR.
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VMMM
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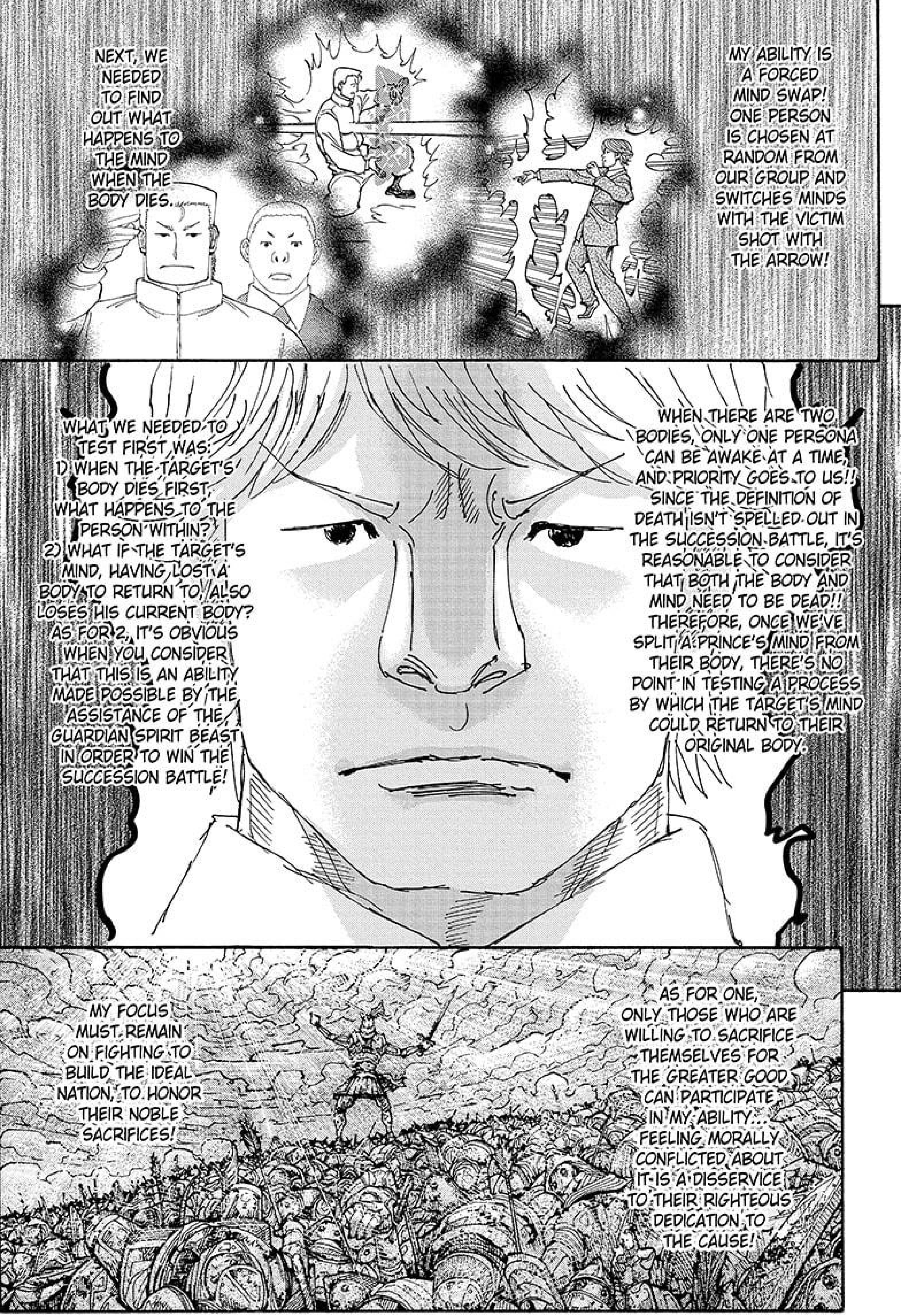
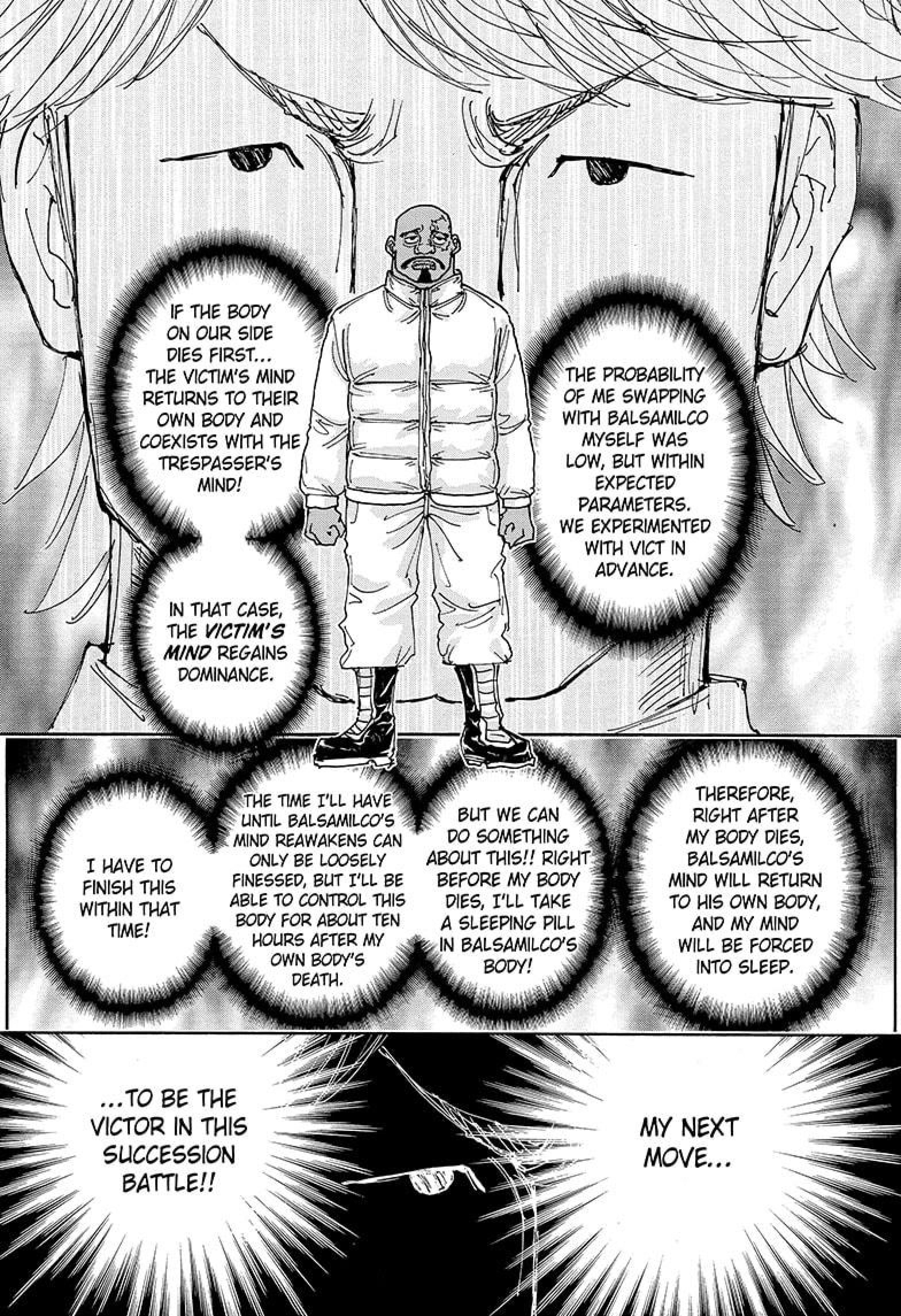
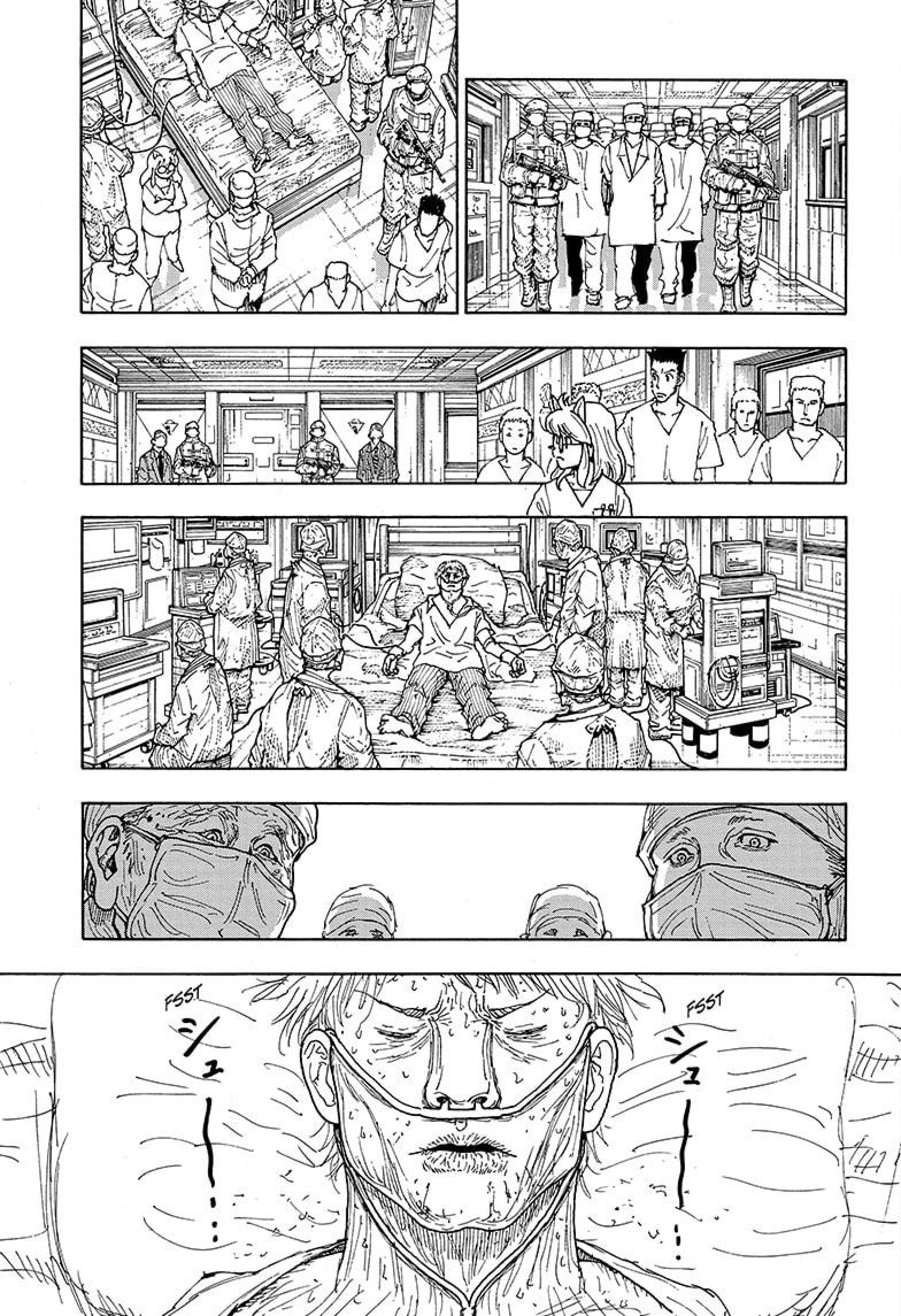
VMMM
WE PROVED OUR HYPOTHESIS IN OUR EXPERIMENT WITH SHIKAKU AND SUMIDORI!! AFTER HE WAS SHOT, SUMIDORI (THE BODY) AWOKE AND RECITED SHIKAKU'S SERVICE NUMBER... WE CONFIRMED THE FACT THAT ONLY ONE OF THE SWAPPED MINDS CAN BE AWAKE AT A TIME. OUR SIDE GENERALLY HAS PRIORITY!!
WHILE SUMIDORI (THE BODY) IS CONSCIOUS, SHIKAKU (THE MIND) WON'T AWAKEN! ONCE SUMIDORI WAKES UP, SHIKAKU IS FORCED TO LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS. TRYING TO AWAKEN SHIKAKU WON'T WORK DURING THIS TIME! THIS PRIORITY IS EARNED BY PUTTING OUR LIVES ON THE LINE!!


MY ABILITY IS A FORCED MIND SWAP! ONE PERSON IS CHOSEN AT RANDOM FROM OUR GROUP AND SWITCHES MINDS WITH THE VICTIM SHOT WITH THE ARROW!
NEXT, WE NEEDED TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MIND WHEN THE BODY DIES.
WHEN THERE ARE TWO BODIES, ONLY ONE PERSONA CAN BE AWAKE AT A TIME, AND PRIORITY GOES TO US!! SINCE THE DEFINITION OF DEATH ISN'T SPELLED OUT IN THE SUCCESSION BATTLE, IT'S REASONABLE TO CONSIDER THAT BOTH THE BODY AND MIND NEED TO BE DEAD!! THEREFORE, ONCE WE'VE SPLIT A PRINCE'S MIND FROM THEIR BODY, THERE'S NO POINT IN TESTING A PROCESS BY WHICH THE TARGET'S MIND COULD RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL BODY.
WHAT WE NEEDED TO TEST FIRST WAS: 1) WHEN THE TARGET'S BODY DIES FIRST, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PERSON WITHIN? 2) WHAT IF THE TARGET'S MIND, HAVING LOST A BODY TO RETURN TO, ALSO LOSES HIS CURRENT BODY? AS FOR 2, IT'S OBVIOUS WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT THIS IS AN ABILITY MADE POSSIBLE BY THE ASSISTANCE OF THE GUARDIAN SPIRIT BEAST IN ORDER TO WIN THE SUCCESSION BATTLE!
AS FOR ONE, ONLY THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE THEMSELVES FOR THE GREATER GOOD CAN PARTICIPATE IN MY ABILITY... FEELING MORALLY CONFLICTED ABOUT IT IS A DISSERVICE TO THEIR RIGHTEOUS DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE!
MY FOCUS MUST REMAIN ON FIGHTING TO BUILD THE IDEAL NATION, TO HONOR THEIR NOBLE SACRIFICES!


THE PROBABILITY OF ME SWAPPING WITH BALSAMILCO MYSELF WAS LOW, BUT WITHIN EXPECTED PARAMETERS. WE EXPERIMENTED WITH VICT IN ADVANCE.
IF THE BODY ON OUR SIDE DIES FIRST... THE VICTIM'S MIND RETURNS TO THEIR OWN BODY AND COEXISTS WITH THE TRESPASSER'S MIND!
IN THAT CASE, THE *VICTIM'S MIND* REGAINS DOMINANCE.
THEREFORE, RIGHT AFTER MY BODY DIES, BALSAMILCO'S MIND WILL RETURN TO HIS OWN BODY, AND MY MIND WILL BE FORCED INTO SLEEP.
BUT WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS!! RIGHT BEFORE MY BODY DIES, I'LL TAKE A SLEEPING PILL IN BALSAMILCO'S BODY!
THE TIME I'LL HAVE UNTIL BALSAMILCO'S MIND REAWAKENS CAN ONLY BE LOOSELY FINESSED, BUT I'LL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THIS BODY FOR ABOUT TEN HOURS AFTER MY OWN BODY'S DEATH.
I HAVE TO FINISH THIS WITHIN THAT TIME!
MY NEXT MOVE...
...TO BE THE VICTOR IN THIS SUCCESSION BATTLE!!


FSST
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FSST
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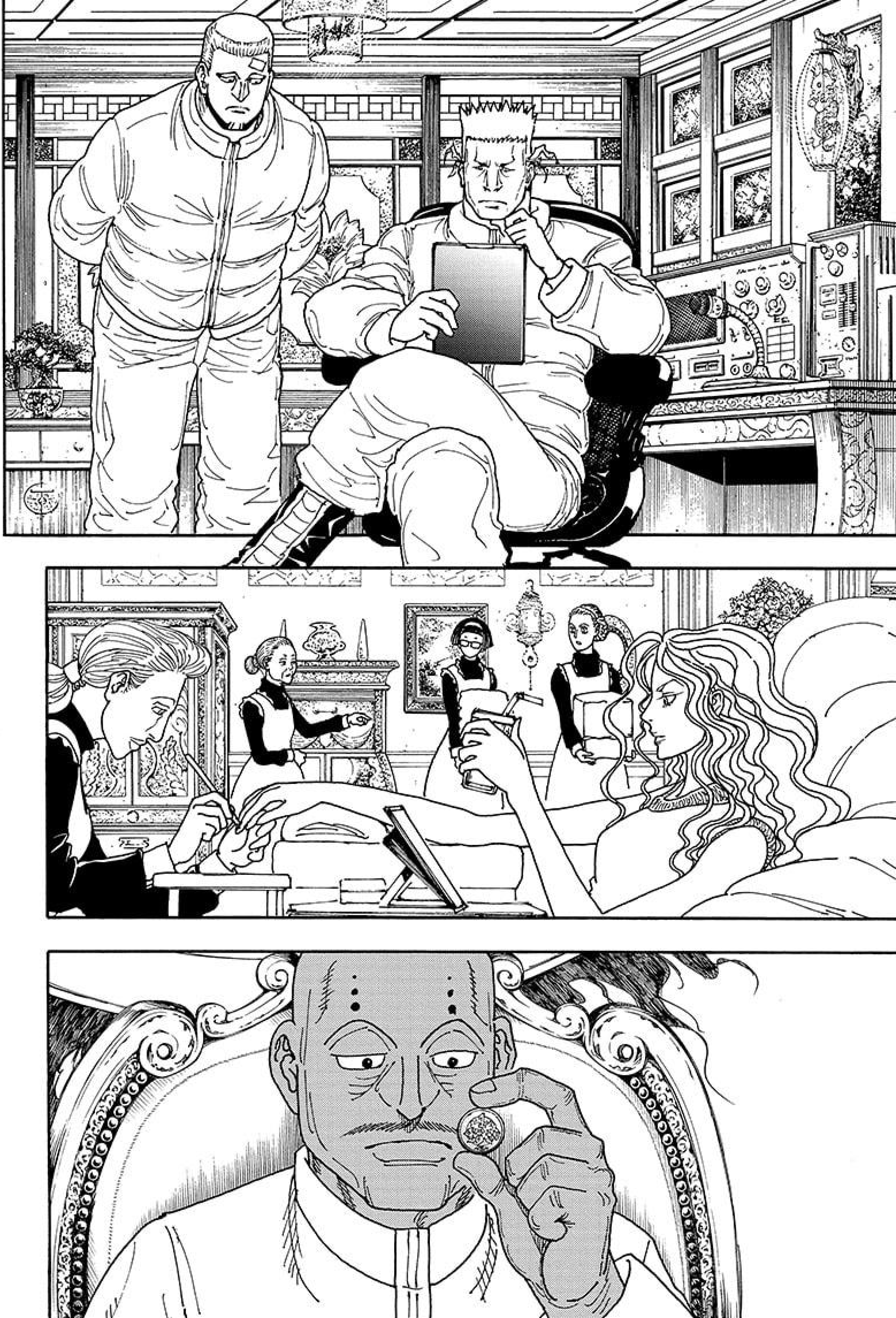
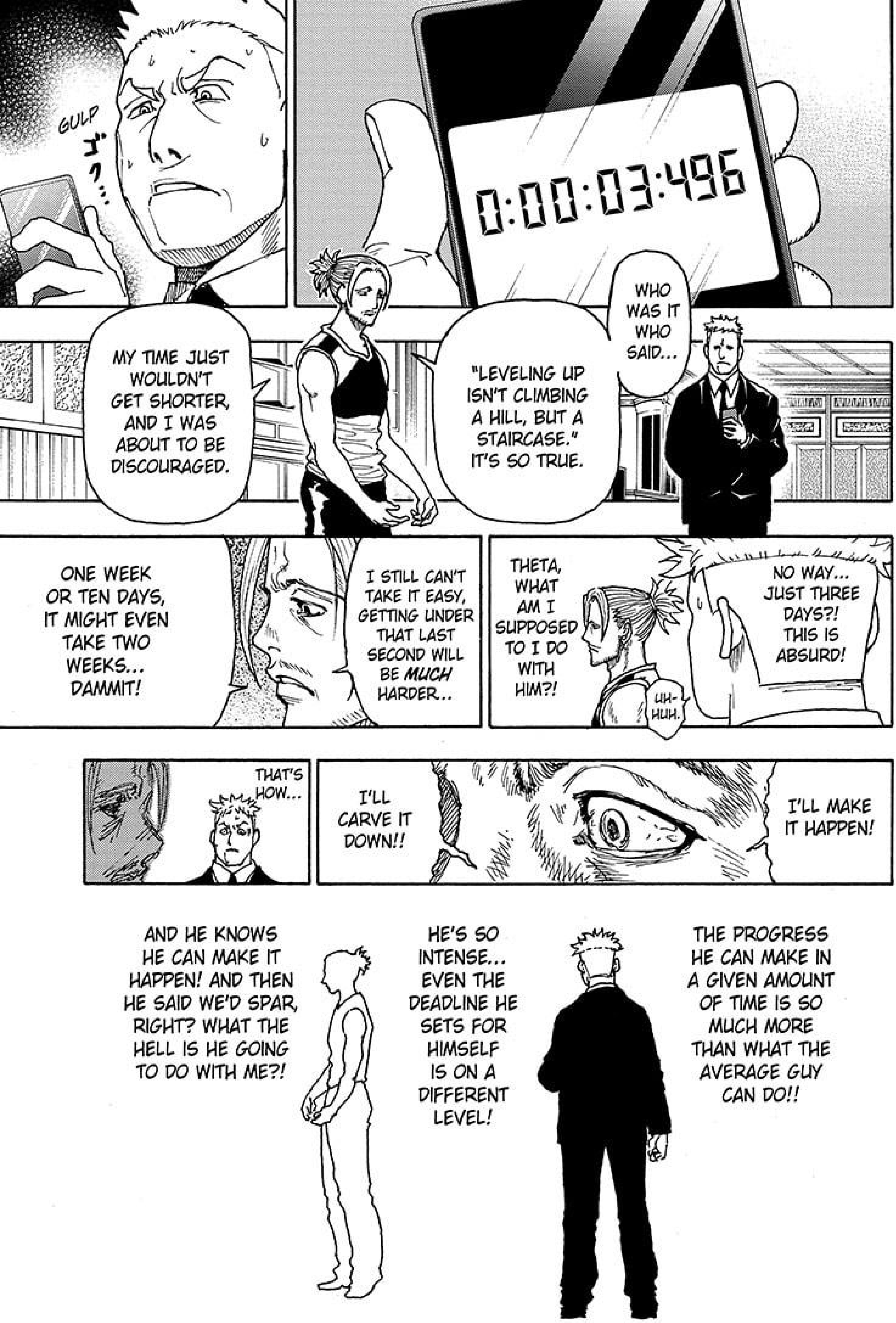
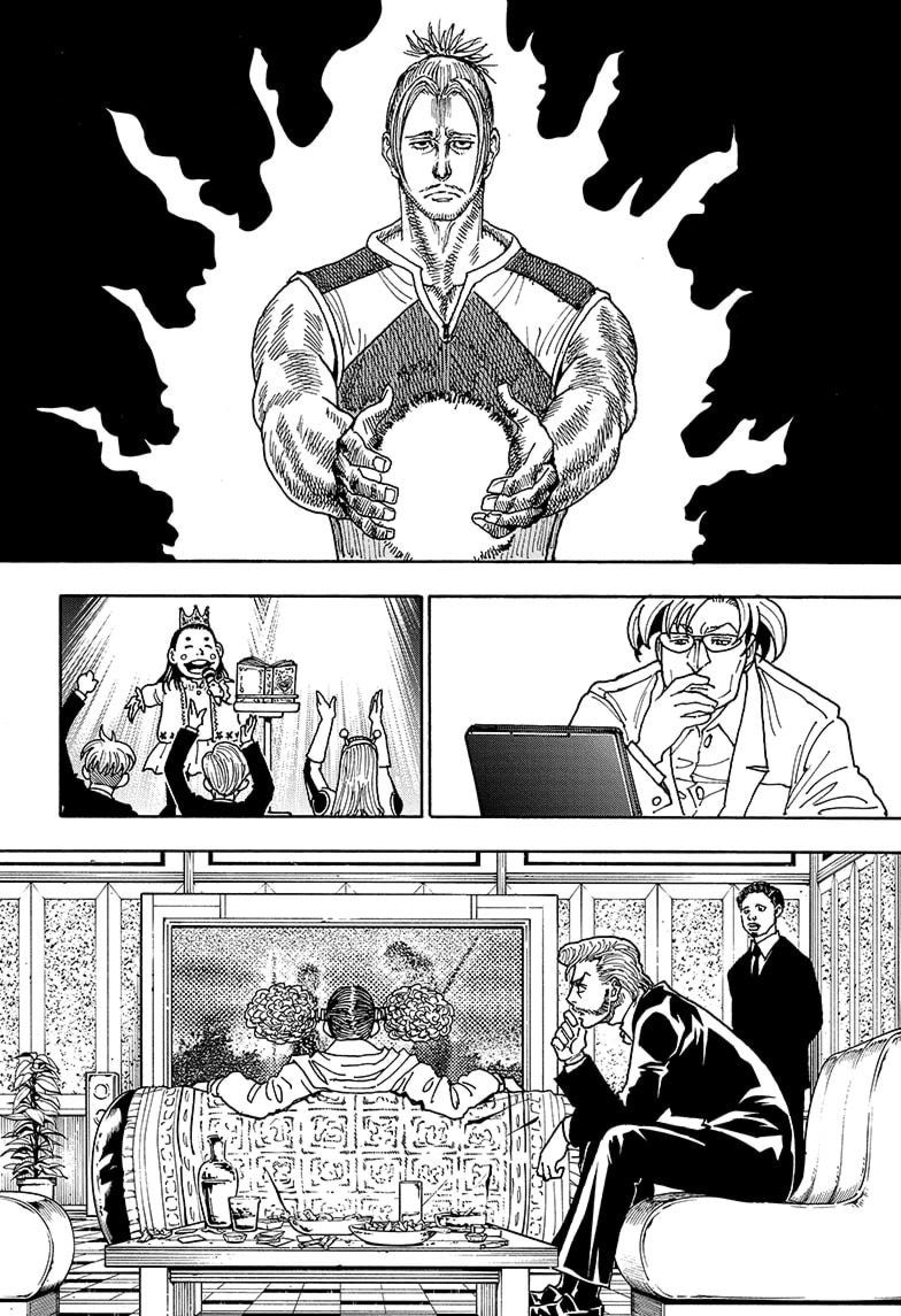
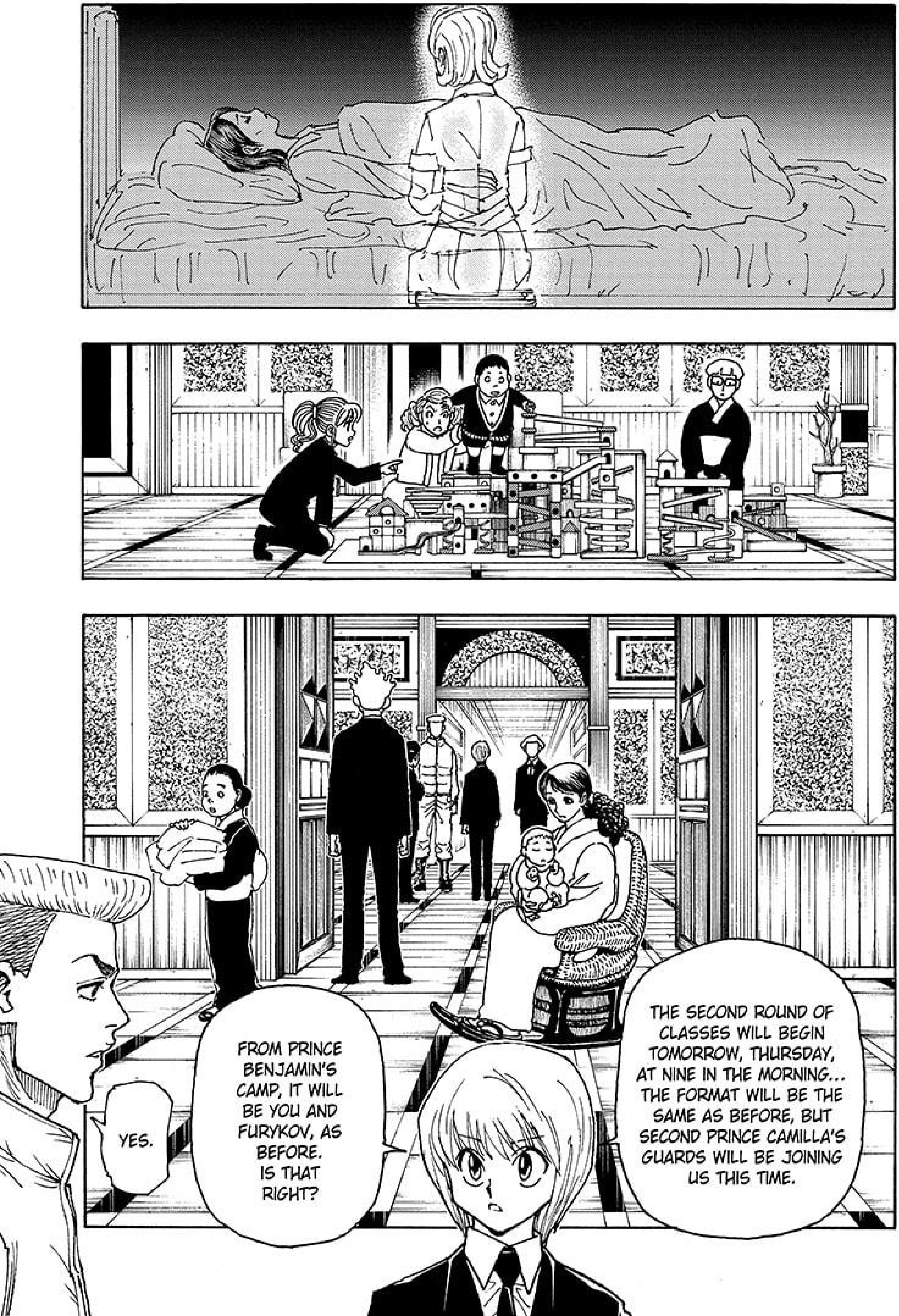
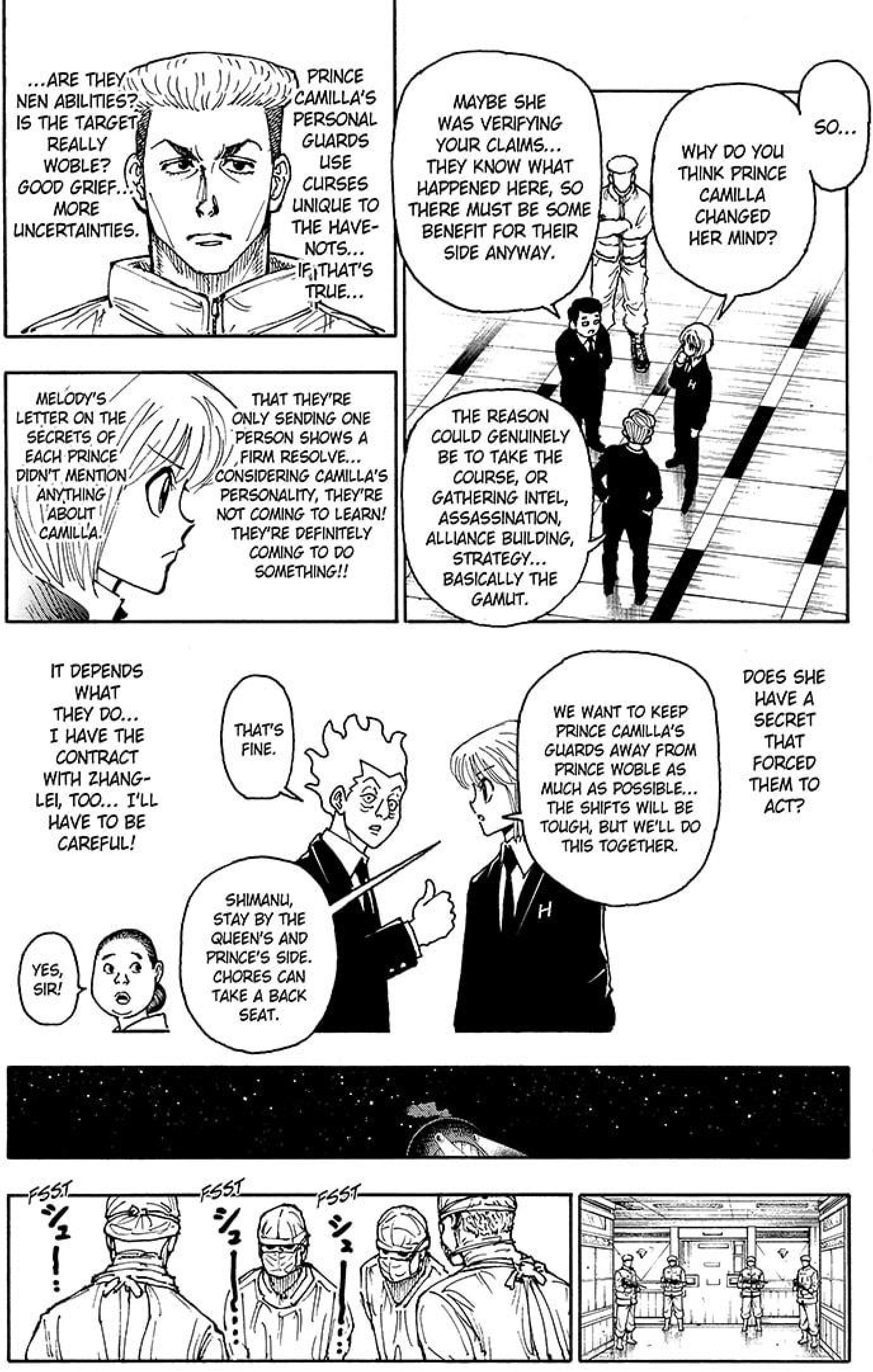



GULP
ゴク…
WHO WAS IT WHO SAID…
"LEVELING UP ISN'T CLIMBING A HILL, BUT A STAIRCASE." IT'S SO TRUE.
MY TIME JUST WOULDN'T GET SHORTER, AND I WAS ABOUT TO BE DISCOURAGED.
NO WAY… JUST THREE DAYS?! THIS IS ABSURD!
UH-HUH.
THETA, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO I DO WITH HIM?!
I STILL CAN'T TAKE IT EASY, GETTING UNDER THAT LAST SECOND WILL BE *MUCH* HARDER…
ONE WEEK OR TEN DAYS, IT MIGHT EVEN TAKE TWO WEEKS… DAMMIT!
I'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN!
I'LL CARVE IT DOWN!!
THAT'S HOW…
THE PROGRESS HE CAN MAKE IN A GIVEN AMOUNT OF TIME IS SO MUCH MORE THAN WHAT THE AVERAGE GUY CAN DO!!
HE'S SO INTENSE… EVEN THE DEADLINE HE SETS FOR HIMSELF IS ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL!
AND HE KNOWS HE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN! AND THEN HE SAID WE'D SPAR, RIGHT? WHAT THE HELL IS HE GOING TO DO WITH ME?!




THE SECOND ROUND OF CLASSES WILL BEGIN TOMORROW, THURSDAY, AT NINE IN THE MORNING... THE FORMAT WILL BE THE SAME AS BEFORE, BUT SECOND PRINCE CAMILLA'S GUARDS WILL BE JOINING US THIS TIME.
FROM PRINCE BENJAMIN'S CAMP, IT WILL BE YOU AND FURYKOV, AS BEFORE. IS THAT RIGHT?
YES.


SO…
WHY DO YOU THINK PRINCE CAMILLA CHANGED HER MIND?
MAYBE SHE WAS VERIFYING YOUR CLAIMS… THEY KNOW WHAT HAPPENED HERE, SO THERE MUST BE SOME BENEFIT FOR THEIR SIDE ANYWAY.
THE REASON COULD GENUINELY BE TO TAKE THE COURSE, OR GATHERING INTEL, ASSASSINATION, ALLIANCE BUILDING, STRATEGY… BASICALLY THE GAMUT.
PRINCE CAMILLA'S PERSONAL GUARDS USE CURSES UNIQUE TO THE HAVE-NOTS… IF THAT'S TRUE…
…ARE THEY NEN ABILITIES? IS THE TARGET REALLY WOBLE? GOOD GRIEF… MORE UNCERTAINTIES.
THAT THEY'RE ONLY SENDING ONE PERSON SHOWS A FIRM RESOLVE… CONSIDERING CAMILLA'S PERSONALITY, THEY'RE NOT COMING TO LEARN! THEY'RE DEFINITELY COMING TO DO SOMETHING!!
MELODY'S LETTER ON THE SECRETS OF EACH PRINCE DIDN'T MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT CAMILLA.
DOES SHE HAVE A SECRET THAT FORCED THEM TO ACT?
WE WANT TO KEEP PRINCE CAMILLA'S GUARDS AWAY FROM PRINCE WOBLE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE… THE SHIFTS WILL BE TOUGH, BUT WE'LL DO THIS TOGETHER.
THAT'S FINE.
SHIMANU, STAY BY THE QUEEN'S AND PRINCE'S SIDE. CHORES CAN TAKE A BACK SEAT.
YES, SIR!
IT DEPENDS WHAT THEY DO… I HAVE THE CONTRACT WITH ZHANG-LEI, TOO… I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL!
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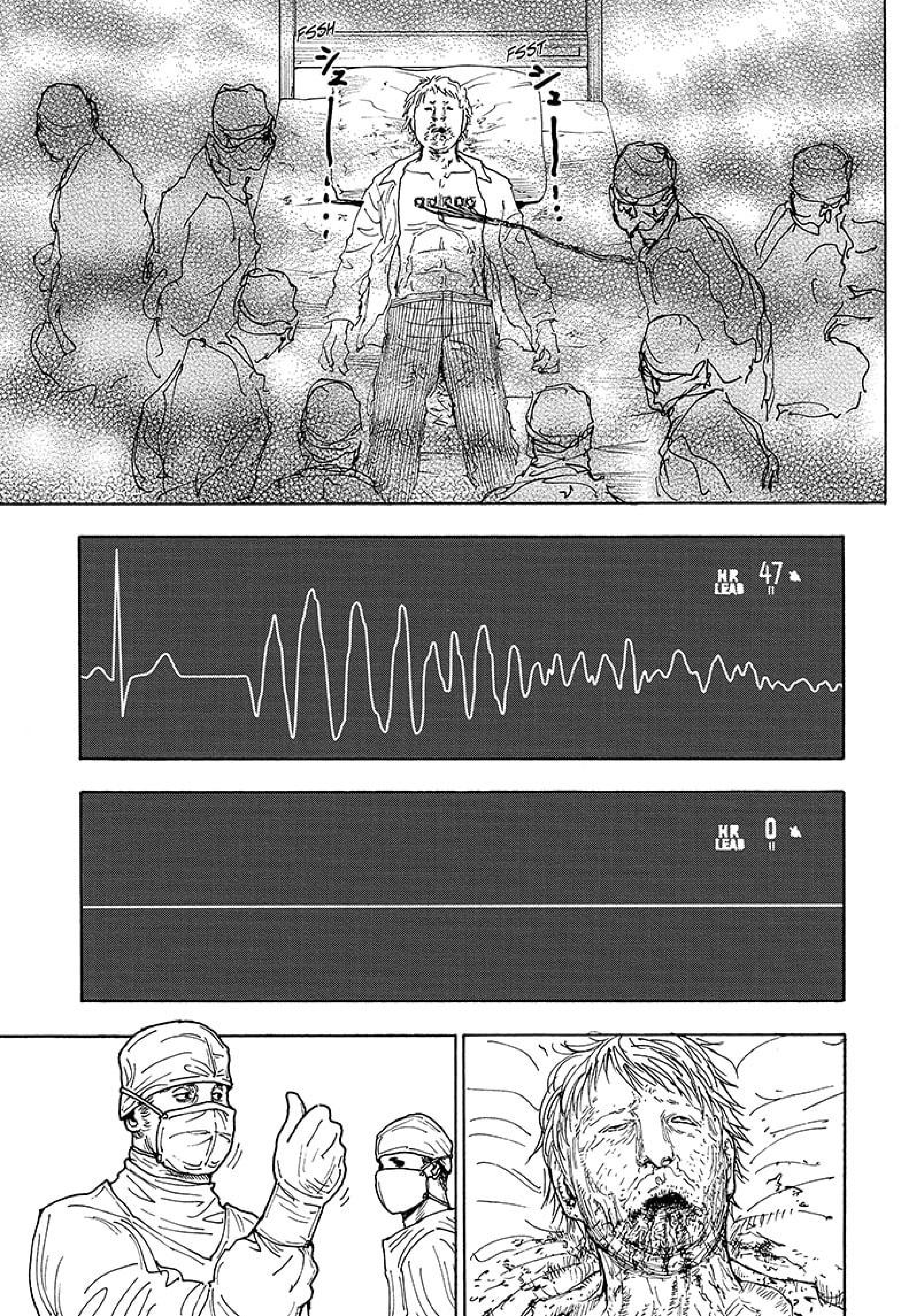
FSST シュー…
FSST シュー…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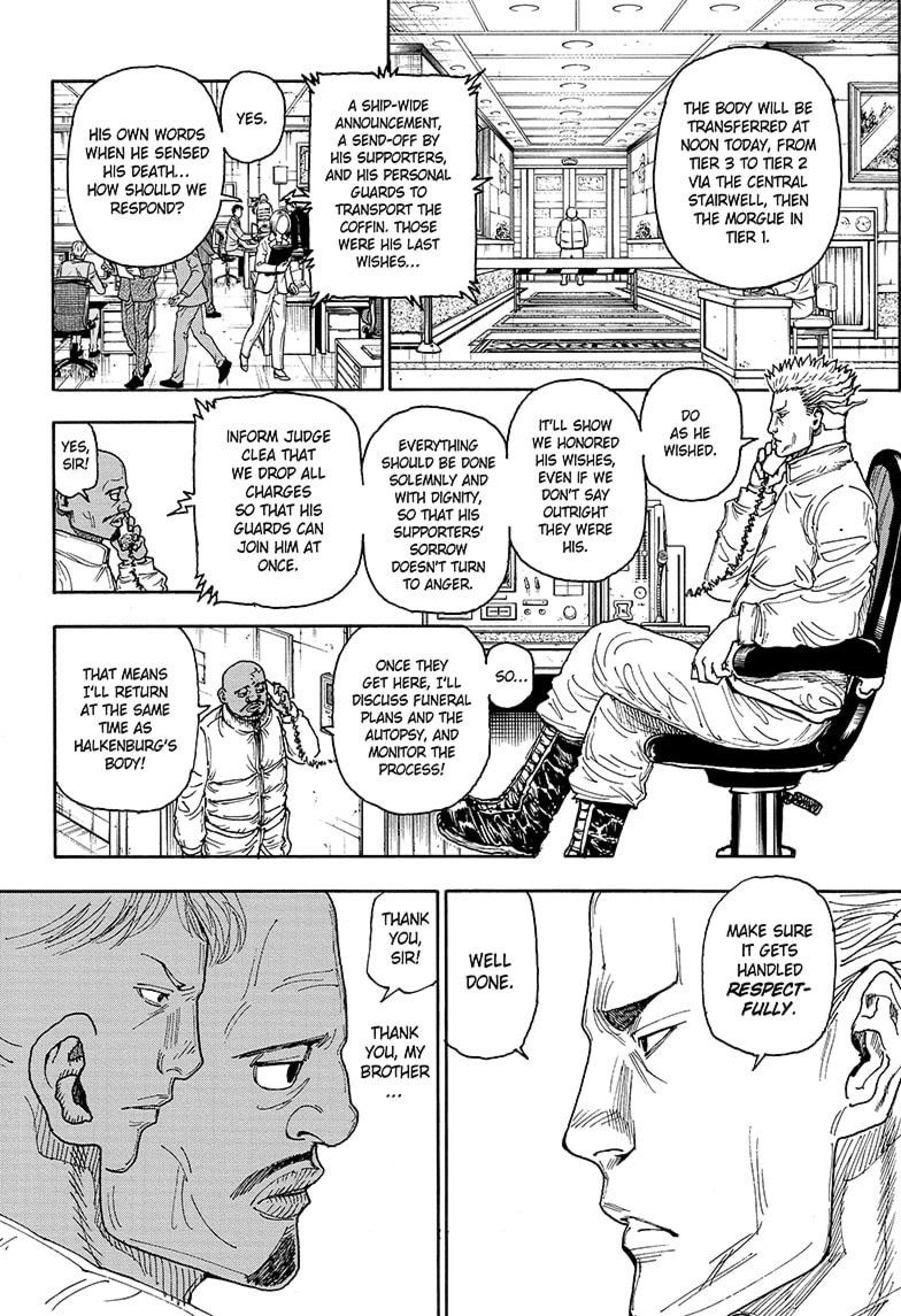
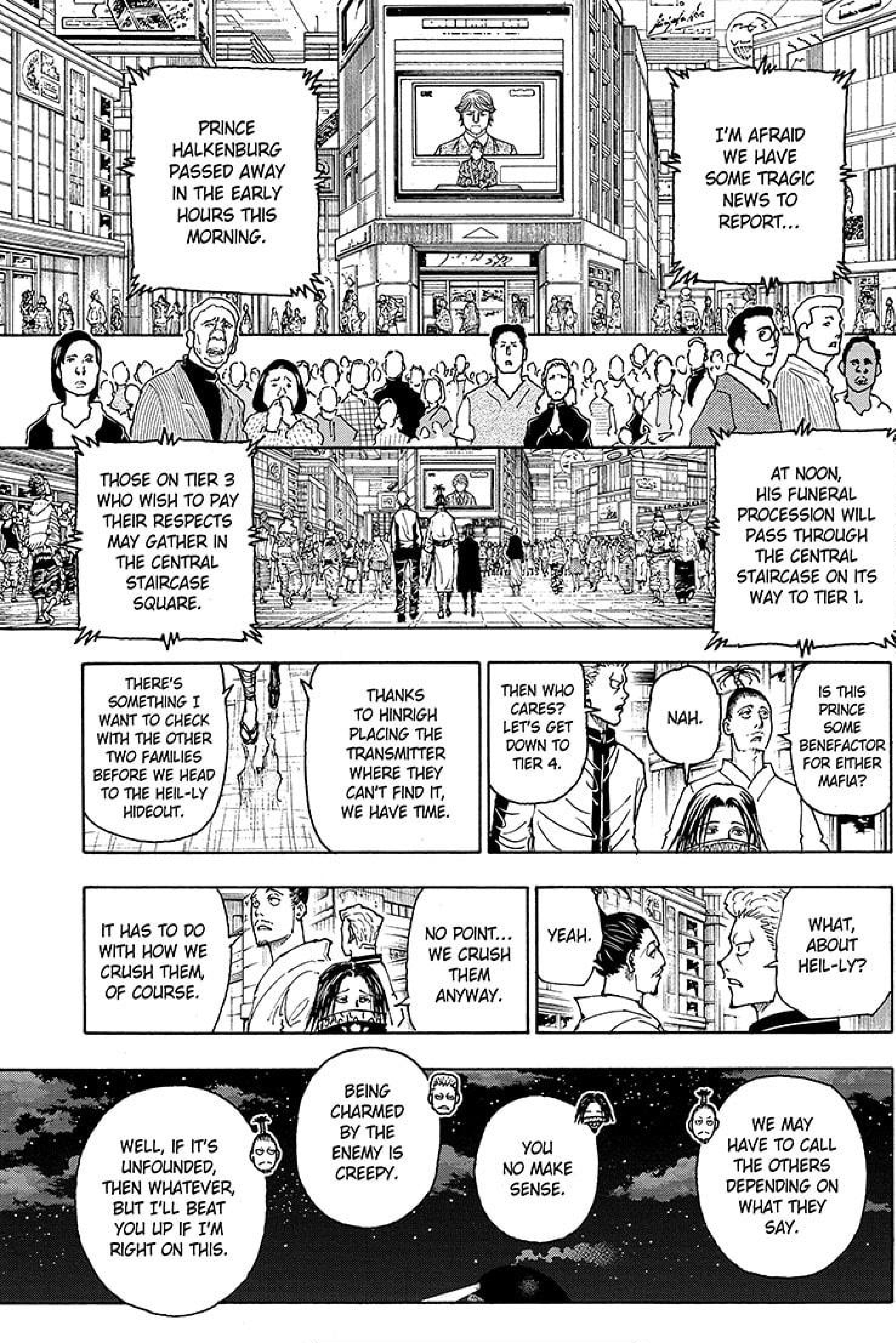
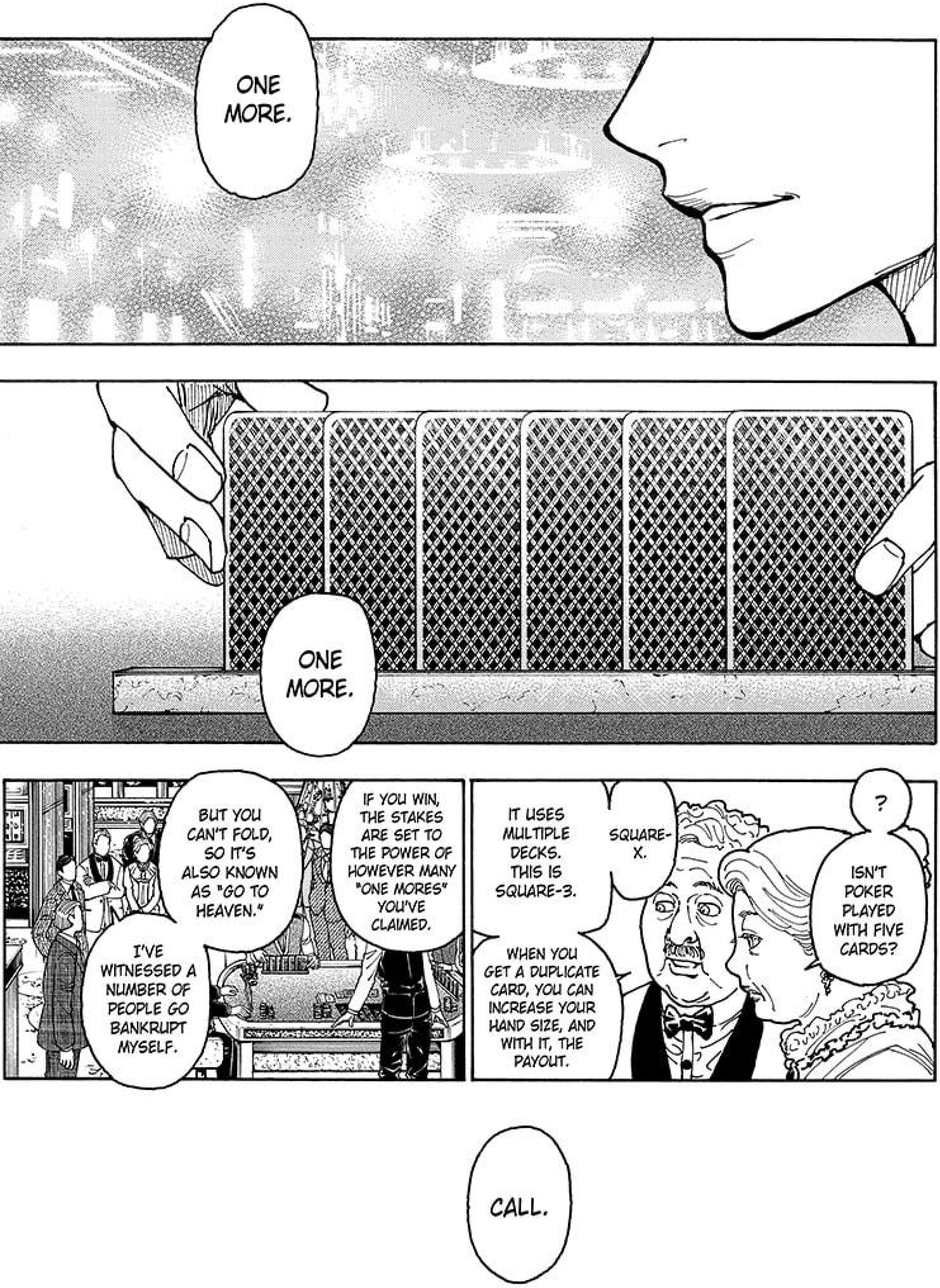

THE BODY WILL BE TRANSFERRED AT NOON TODAY, FROM TIER 3 TO TIER 2 VIA THE CENTRAL STAIRWELL, THEN THE MORGUE IN TIER 1.
A SHIP-WIDE ANNOUNCEMENT, A SEND-OFF BY HIS SUPPORTERS, AND HIS PERSONAL GUARDS TO TRANSPORT THE COFFIN. THOSE WERE HIS LAST WISHES...
YES.
HIS OWN WORDS WHEN HE SENSED HIS DEATH... HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?
DO AS HE WISHED.
IT'LL SHOW WE HONORED HIS WISHES, EVEN IF WE DON'T SAY OUTRIGHT THEY WERE HIS.
EVERYTHING SHOULD BE DONE SOLEMNLY AND WITH DIGNITY, SO THAT HIS SUPPORTERS' SORROW DOESN'T TURN TO ANGER.
INFORM JUDGE CLEA THAT WE DROP ALL CHARGES SO THAT HIS GUARDS CAN JOIN HIM AT ONCE.
YES, SIR!
SO...
ONCE THEY GET HERE, I'LL DISCUSS FUNERAL PLANS AND THE AUTOPSY, AND MONITOR THE PROCESS!
THAT MEANS I'LL RETURN AT THE SAME TIME AS HALKENBURG'S BODY!
MAKE SURE IT GETS HANDLED *RESPECTFULLY*.
WELL DONE.
THANK YOU, SIR!
THANK YOU, MY BROTHER ...


I'M AFRAID WE HAVE SOME TRAGIC NEWS TO REPORT...
PRINCE HALKENBURG PASSED AWAY IN THE EARLY HOURS THIS MORNING.
AT NOON, HIS FUNERAL PROCESSION WILL PASS THROUGH THE CENTRAL STAIRCASE ON ITS WAY TO TIER 1.
THOSE ON TIER 3 WHO WISH TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS MAY GATHER IN THE CENTRAL STAIRCASE SQUARE.
IS THIS PRINCE SOME BENEFACTOR FOR EITHER MAFIA?
NAH.
THEN WHO CARES? LET'S GET DOWN TO TIER 4.
THANKS TO HINRIGH PLACING THE TRANSMITTER WHERE THEY CAN'T FIND IT, WE HAVE TIME.
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO CHECK WITH THE OTHER TWO FAMILIES BEFORE WE HEAD TO THE HEIL-LY HIDEOUT.
WHAT, ABOUT HEIL-LY?
YEAH.
NO POINT... WE CRUSH THEM ANYWAY.
IT HAS TO DO WITH HOW WE CRUSH THEM, OF COURSE.
WE MAY HAVE TO CALL THE OTHERS DEPENDING ON WHAT THEY SAY.
YOU NO MAKE SENSE.
BEING CHARMED BY THE ENEMY IS CREEPY.
WELL, IF IT'S UNFOUNDED, THEN WHATEVER, BUT I'LL BEAT YOU UP IF I'M RIGHT ON THIS.

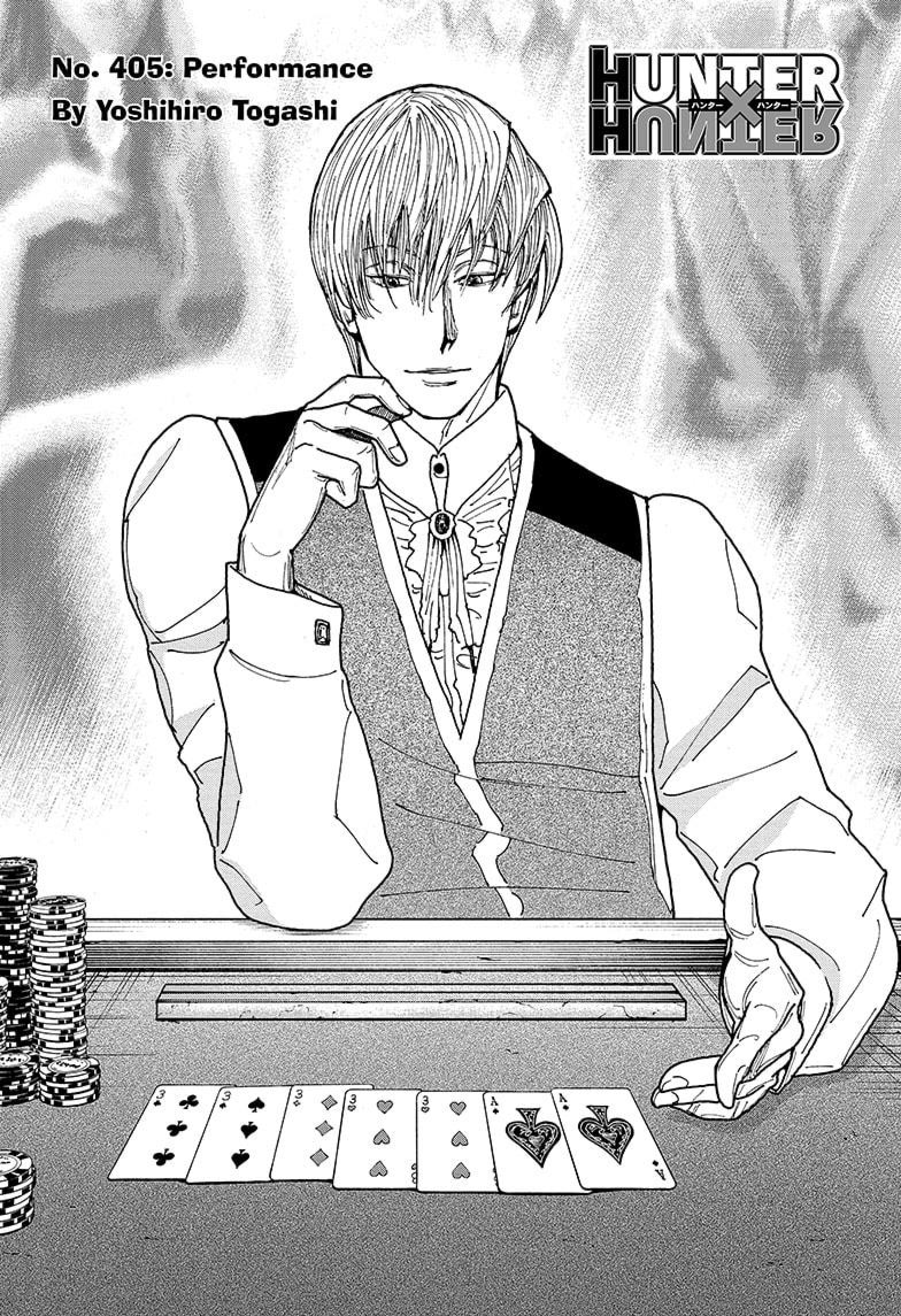
To be continued!

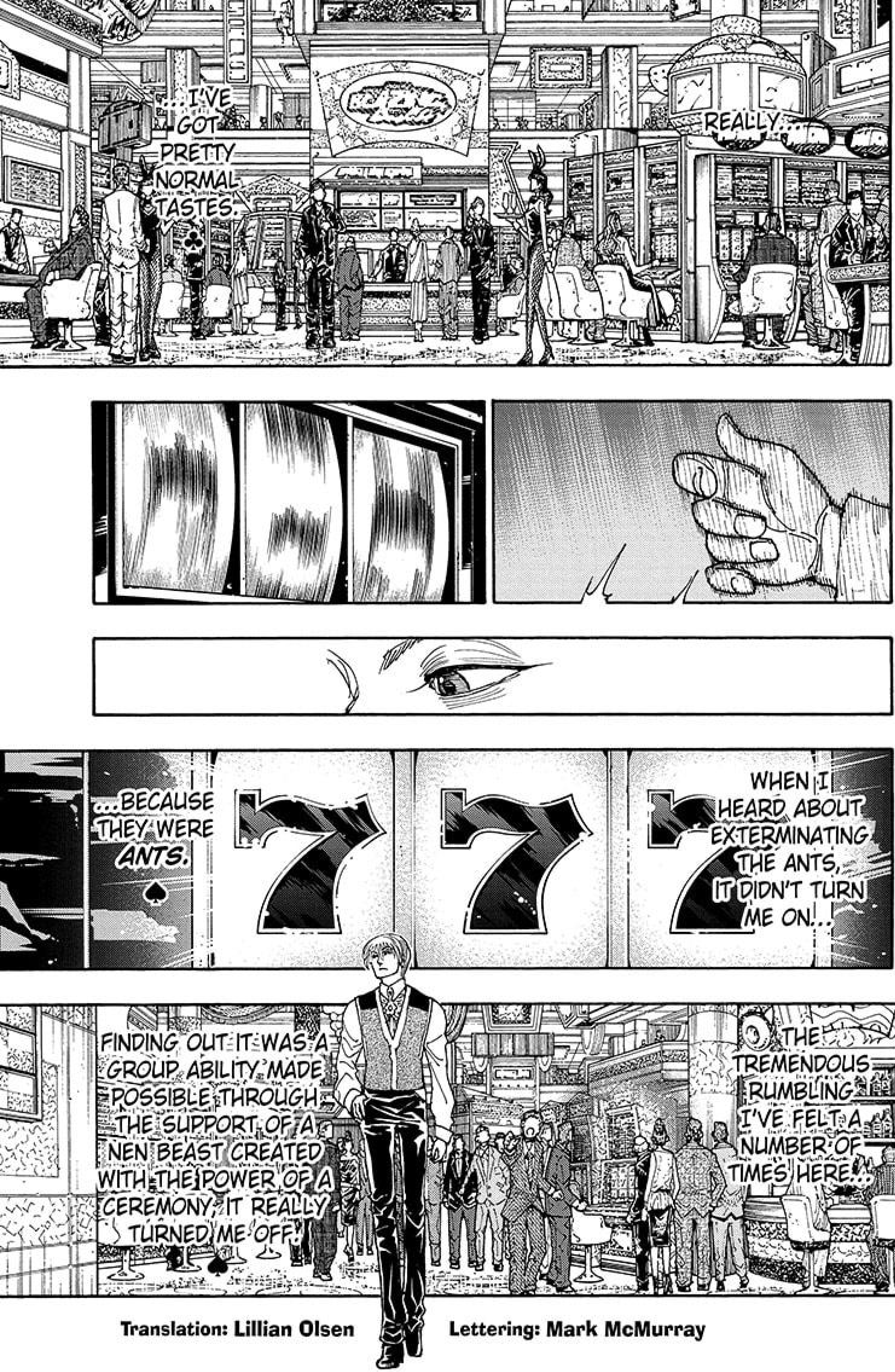

ONE MORE.
ONE MORE.
?
ISN'T POKER PLAYED WITH FIVE CARDS?
SQUARE-X.
IT USES MULTIPLE DECKS. THIS IS SQUARE-3.
WHEN YOU GET A DUPLICATE CARD, YOU CAN INCREASE YOUR HAND SIZE, AND WITH IT, THE PAYOUT.
IF YOU WIN, THE STAKES ARE SET TO THE POWER OF HOWEVER MANY "ONE MORES" YOU'VE CLAIMED.
BUT YOU CAN'T FOLD, SO IT'S ALSO KNOWN AS "GO TO HEAVEN."
I'VE WITNESSED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE GO BANKRUPT MYSELF.
CALL.

HUNTER×HUNTER

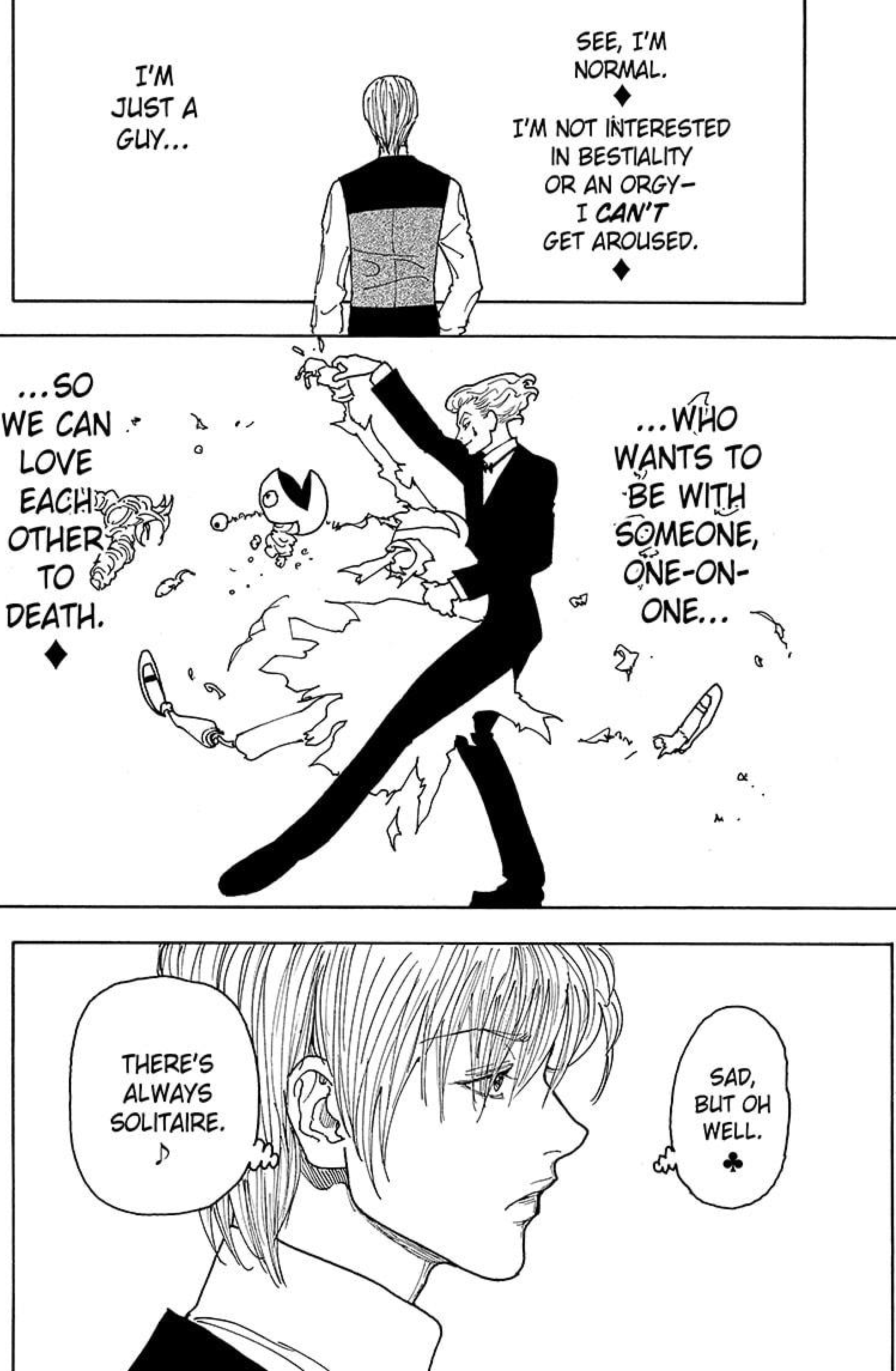
No. 405: Performance

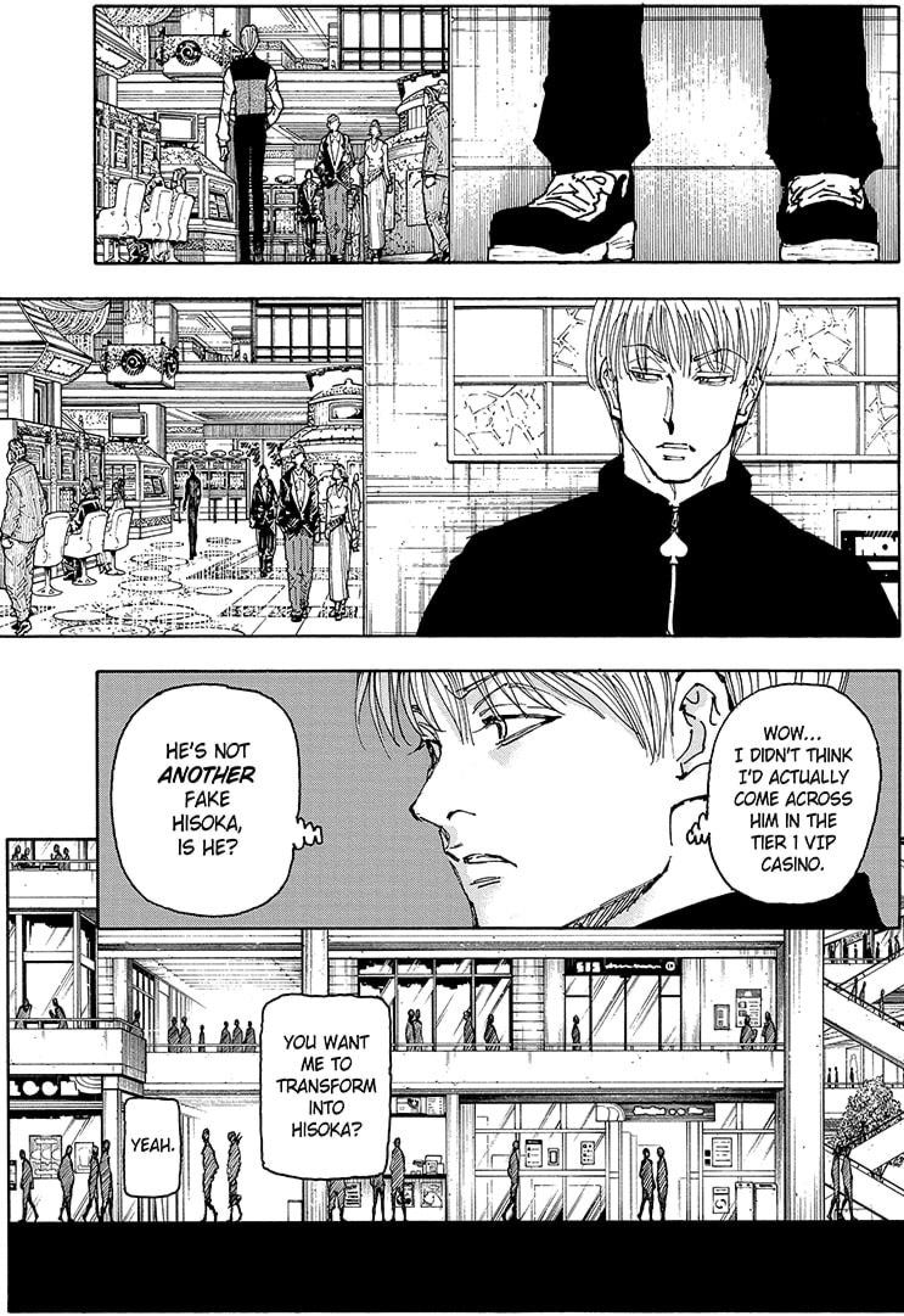
By Yoshihiro Togashi

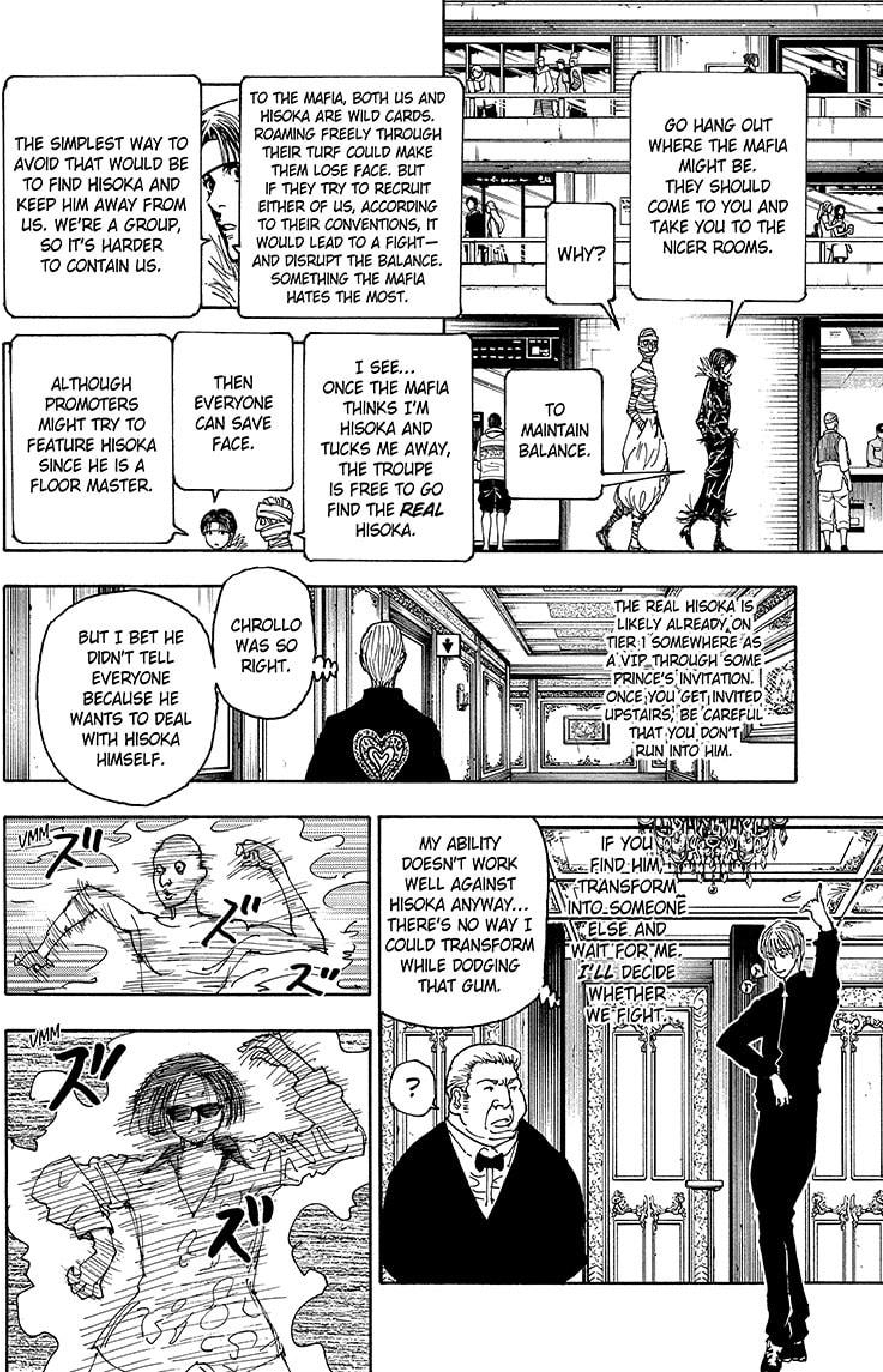


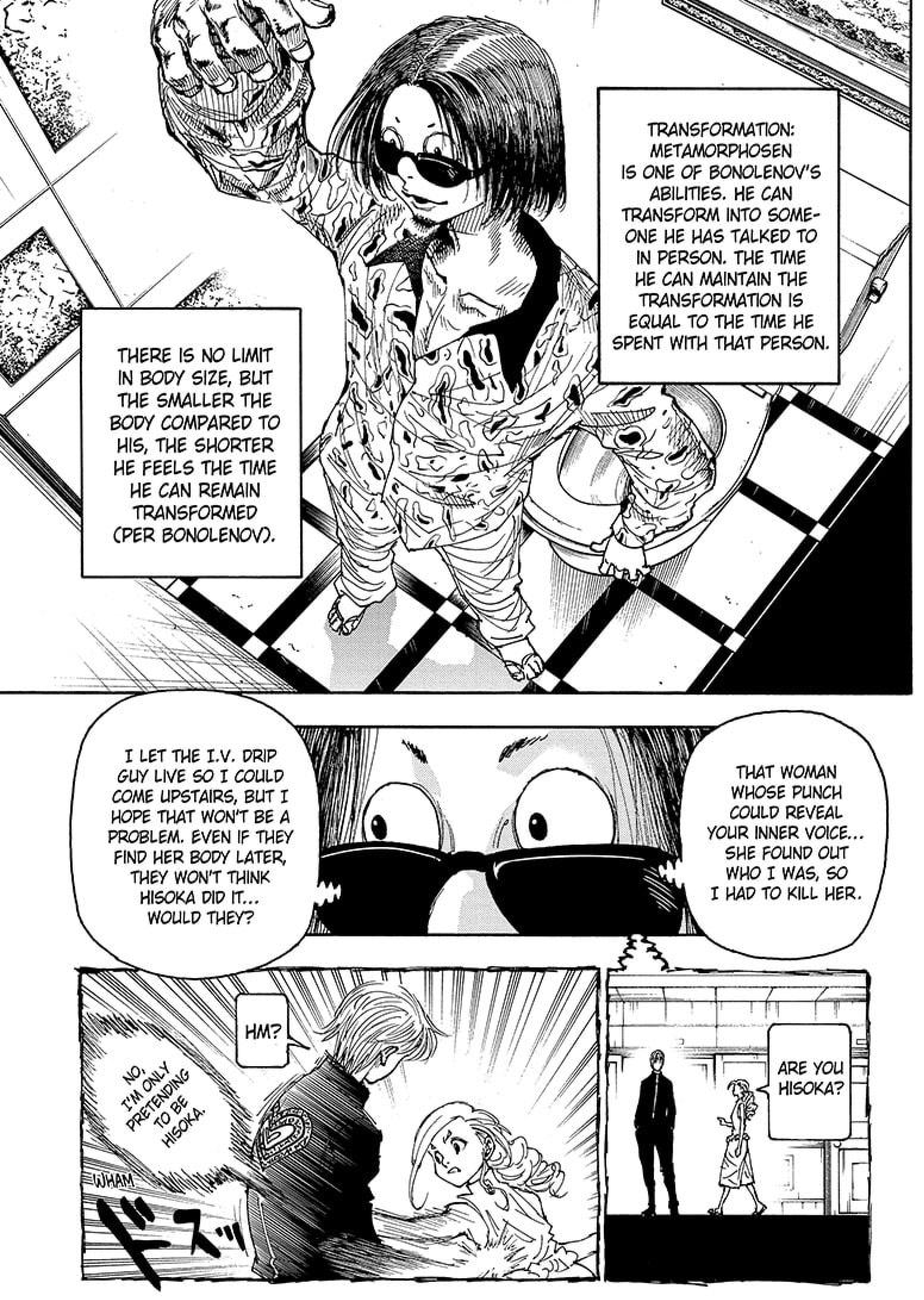

REALLY...
...I'VE GOT PRETTY NORMAL TASTES.
WHEN I HEARD ABOUT EXTERMINATING THE ANTS, IT DIDN'T TURN ME ON..!
...BECAUSE THEY WERE *ANTS.*
THE TREMENDOUS RUMBLING I'VE FELT A NUMBER OF TIMES HERE...
FINDING OUT IT WAS A GROUP ABILITY MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF A NEN BEAST CREATED WITH THE POWER OF A CEREMONY, IT REALLY TURNED ME OFF.

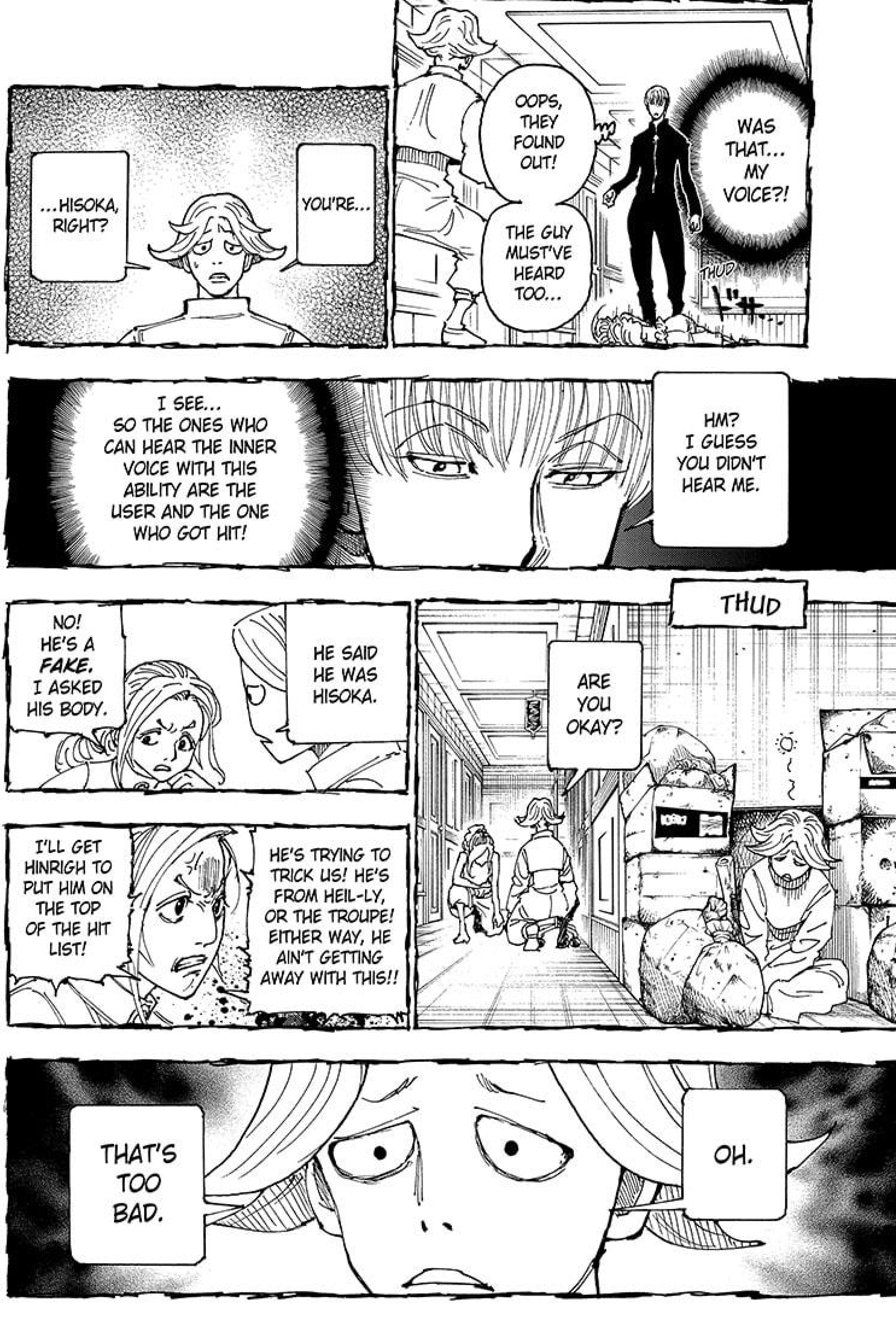
Translation: Lillian Olsen **Lettering: Mark McMurray**

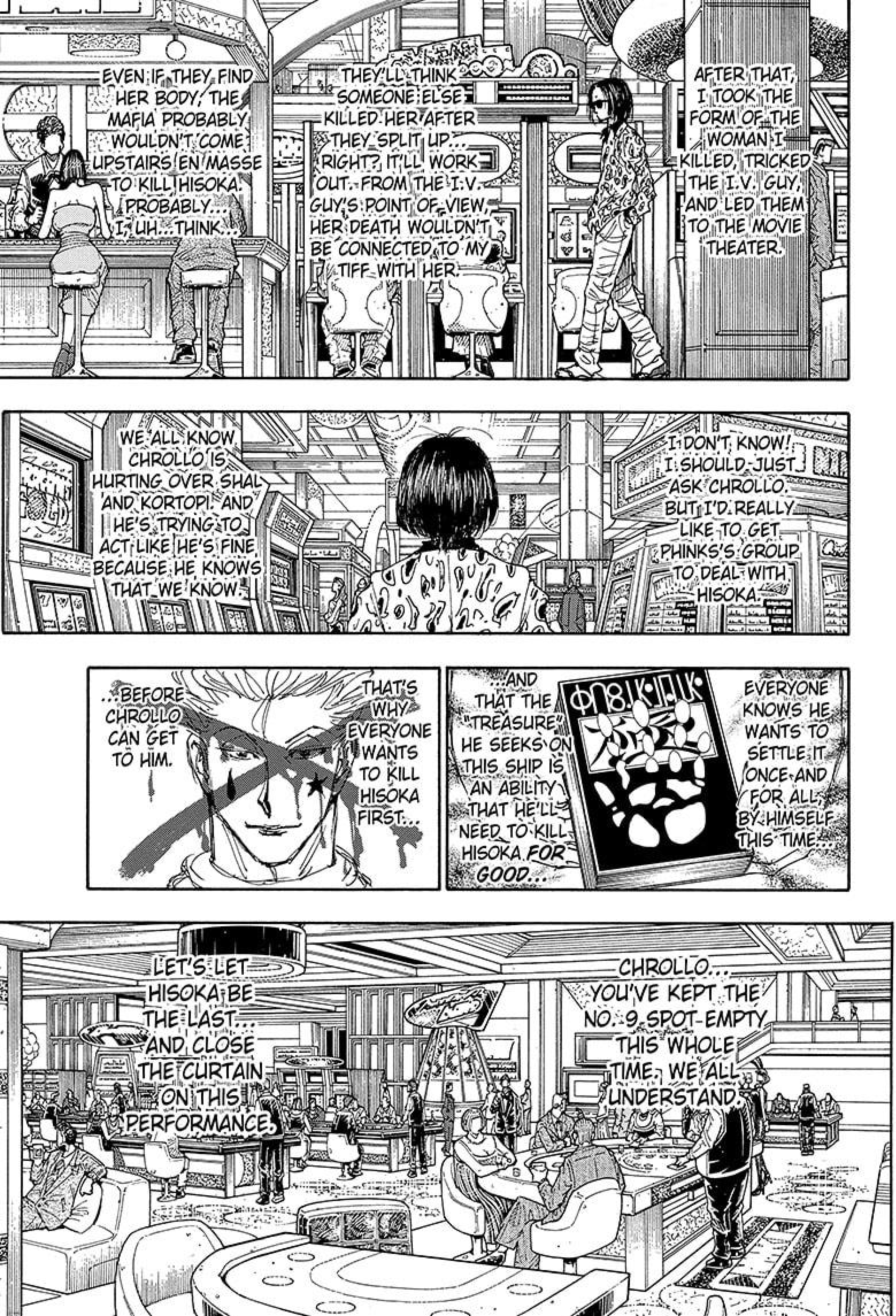

SEE, I'M NORMAL. ◆
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN BESTIALITY OR AN ORGY— I **CAN'T** GET AROUSED. ◆
I'M JUST A GUY...
...WHO WANTS TO BE WITH SOMEONE, ONE-ON-ONE...
...SO WE CAN LOVE EACH OTHER TO DEATH. ◆
SAD, BUT OH WELL. ♣
THERE'S ALWAYS SOLITAIRE. ♪

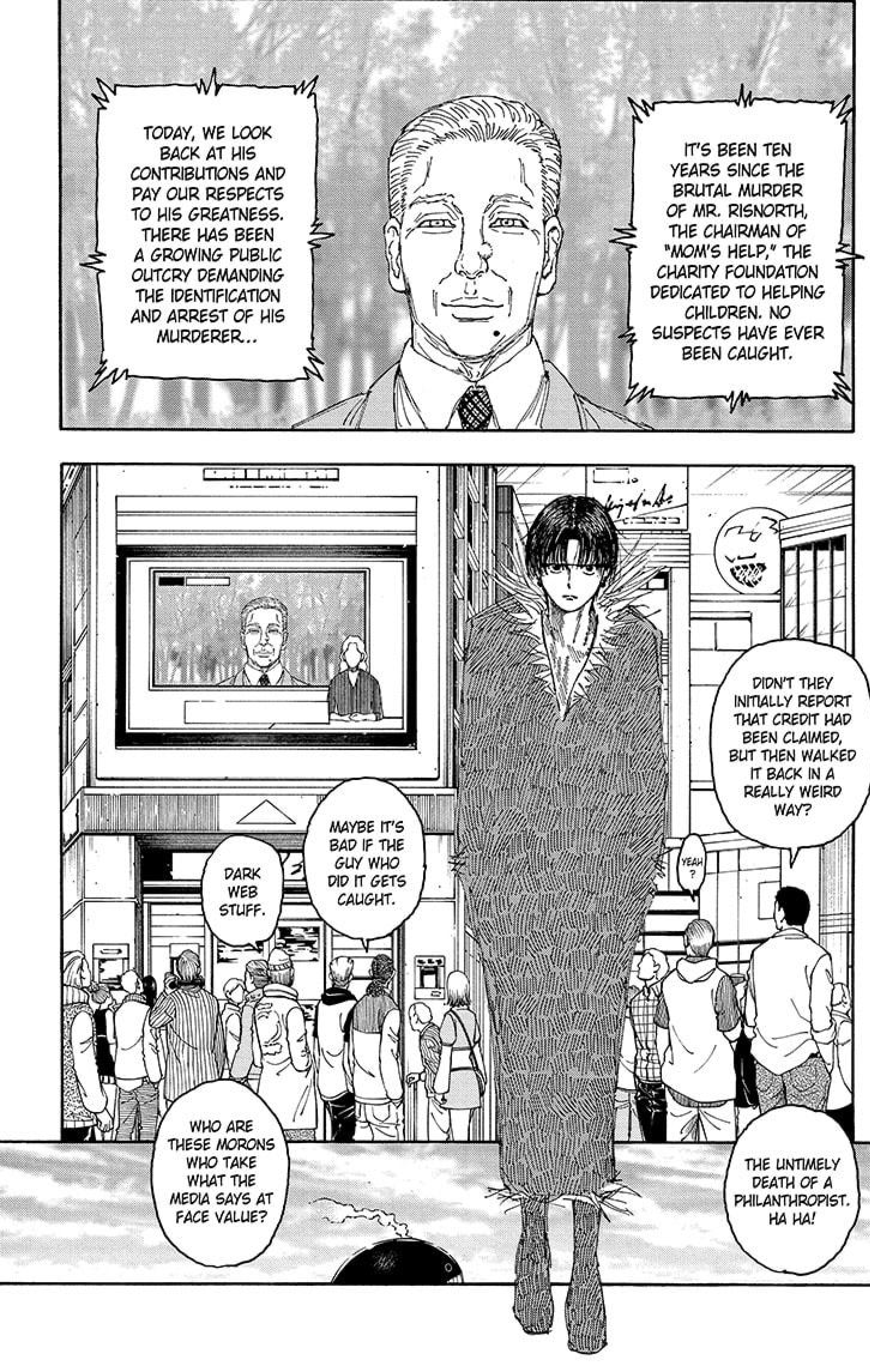

WOW... I DIDN'T THINK I'D ACTUALLY COME ACROSS HIM IN THE TIER 1 VIP CASINO.
HE'S NOT *ANOTHER* FAKE HISOKA, IS HE?
YOU WANT ME TO TRANSFORM INTO HISOKA?
YEAH.

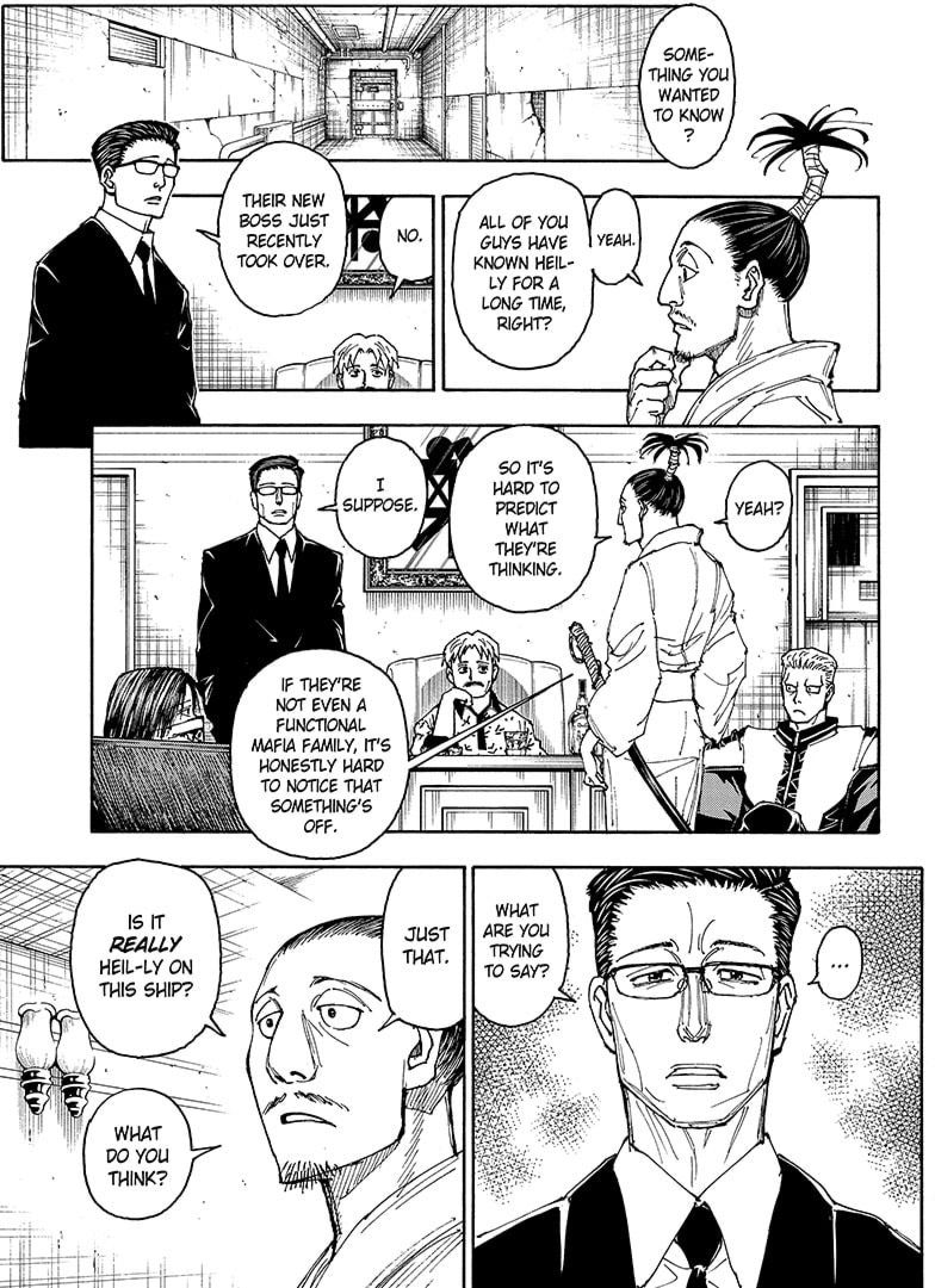

GO HANG OUT WHERE THE MAFIA MIGHT BE. THEY SHOULD COME TO YOU AND TAKE YOU TO THE NICER ROOMS.
WHY?
TO MAINTAIN BALANCE.
TO THE MAFIA, BOTH US AND HISOKA ARE WILD CARDS. ROAMING FREELY THROUGH THEIR TURF COULD MAKE THEM LOSE FACE. BUT IF THEY TRY TO RECRUIT EITHER OF US, ACCORDING TO THEIR CONVENTIONS, IT WOULD LEAD TO A FIGHT— AND DISRUPT THE BALANCE. SOMETHING THE MAFIA HATES THE MOST.
THE SIMPLEST WAY TO AVOID THAT WOULD BE TO FIND HISOKA AND KEEP HIM AWAY FROM US. WE'RE A GROUP, SO IT'S HARDER TO CONTAIN US.
I SEE... ONCE THE MAFIA THINKS I'M HISOKA AND TUCKS ME AWAY, THE TROUPE IS FREE TO GO FIND THE *REAL* HISOKA.
THEN EVERYONE CAN SAVE FACE.
ALTHOUGH PROMOTERS MIGHT TRY TO FEATURE HISOKA SINCE HE IS A FLOOR MASTER.
THE REAL HISOKA IS LIKELY ALREADY ON TIER 1 SOMEWHERE AS A VIP THROUGH SOME PRINCE'S INVITATION. ONCE YOU GET INVITED UPSTAIRS, BE CAREFUL THAT YOU DON'T RUN INTO HIM.
CHROLLO WAS SO RIGHT.
BUT I BET HE DIDN'T TELL EVERYONE BECAUSE HE WANTS TO DEAL WITH HISOKA HIMSELF.
IF YOU FIND HIM, TRANSFORM INTO SOMEONE ELSE AND WAIT FOR ME. *I'LL* DECIDE WHETHER WE FIGHT.
MY ABILITY DOESN'T WORK WELL AGAINST HISOKA ANYWAY... THERE'S NO WAY I COULD TRANSFORM WHILE DODGING THAT GUM.
?
VMM ズ ズ ズ
VMM ズ ズ

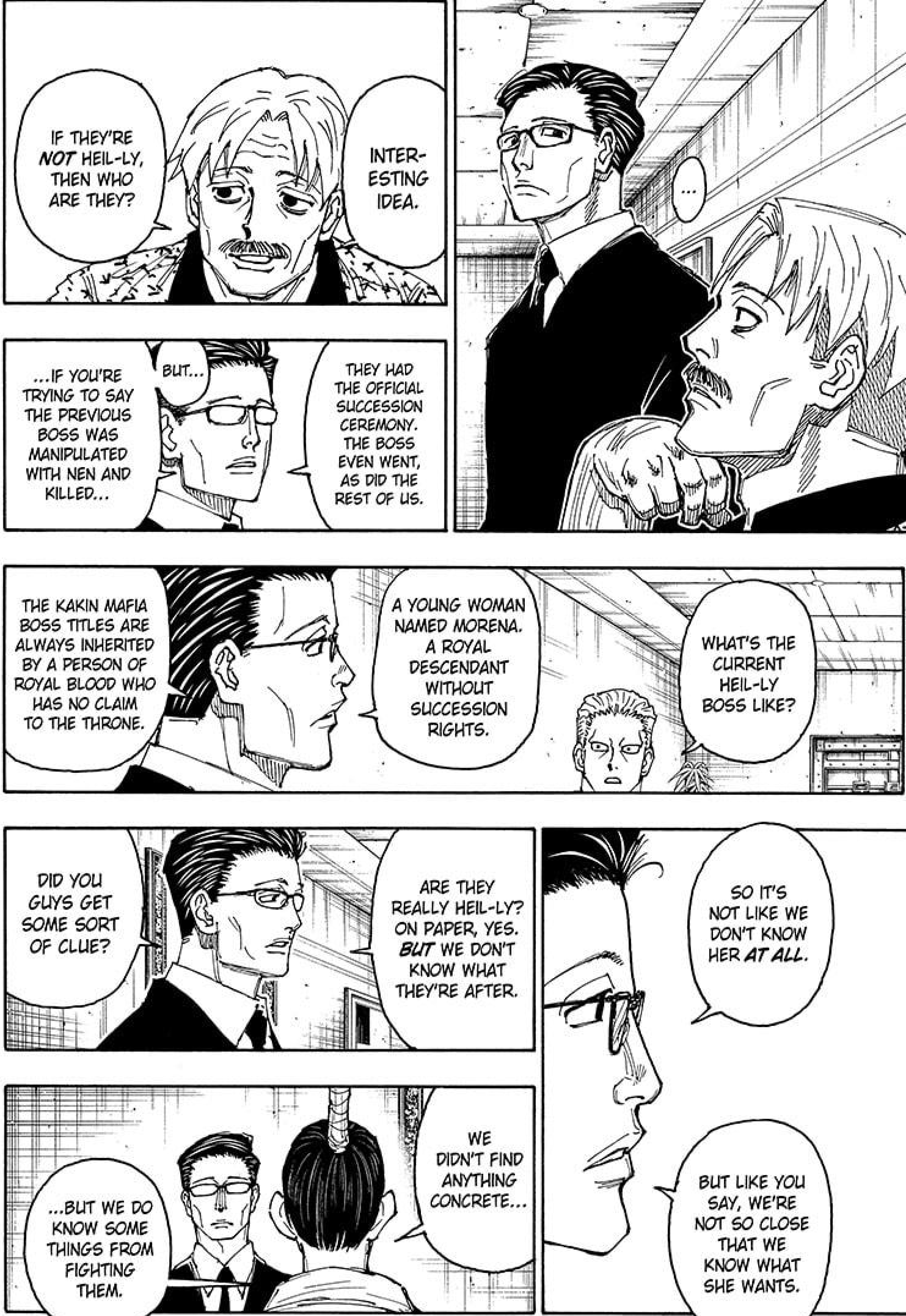

TRANSFORMATION: METAMORPHOSEN IS ONE OF BONOLENOV'S ABILITIES. HE CAN TRANSFORM INTO SOMEONE HE HAS TALKED TO IN PERSON. THE TIME HE CAN MAINTAIN THE TRANSFORMATION IS EQUAL TO THE TIME HE SPENT WITH THAT PERSON.
THERE IS NO LIMIT IN BODY SIZE, BUT THE SMALLER THE BODY COMPARED TO HIS, THE SHORTER HE FEELS THE TIME HE CAN REMAIN TRANSFORMED (PER BONOLENOV).
THAT WOMAN WHOSE PUNCH COULD REVEAL YOUR INNER VOICE… SHE FOUND OUT WHO I WAS, SO I HAD TO KILL HER.
I LET THE I.V. DRIP GUY LIVE SO I COULD COME UPSTAIRS, BUT I HOPE THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM. EVEN IF THEY FIND HER BODY LATER, THEY WON'T THINK HISOKA DID IT… WOULD THEY?
ARE YOU HISOKA?
HM?
NO, I'M ONLY PRETENDING TO BE HISOKA.
WHAM
ドスッ

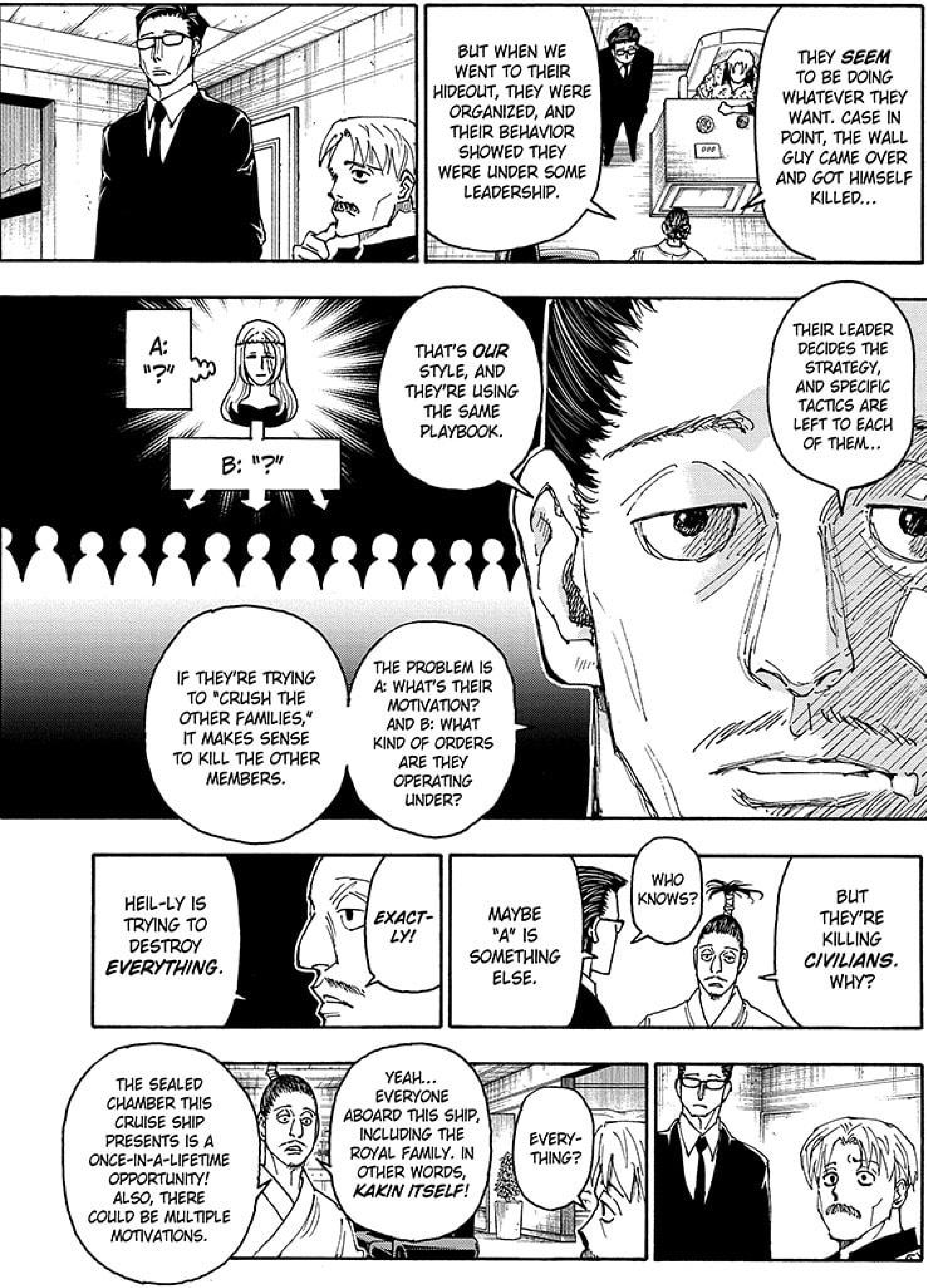

WAS THAT... MY VOICE?!
OOPS, THEY FOUND OUT!
THE GUY MUST'VE HEARD TOO...
THUD
YOU'RE...
...HISOKA, RIGHT?
HM? I GUESS YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME.
I SEE... SO THE ONES WHO CAN HEAR THE INNER VOICE WITH THIS ABILITY ARE THE USER AND THE ONE WHO GOT HIT!
THUD
ARE YOU OKAY?
HE SAID HE WAS HISOKA.
NO! HE'S A FAKE. I ASKED HIS BODY.
HE'S TRYING TO TRICK US! HE'S FROM HEIL-LY, OR THE TROUPE! EITHER WAY, HE AIN'T GETTING AWAY WITH THIS!!
I'LL GET HINRIGH TO PUT HIM ON THE TOP OF THE HIT LIST!
OH.
THAT'S TOO BAD.

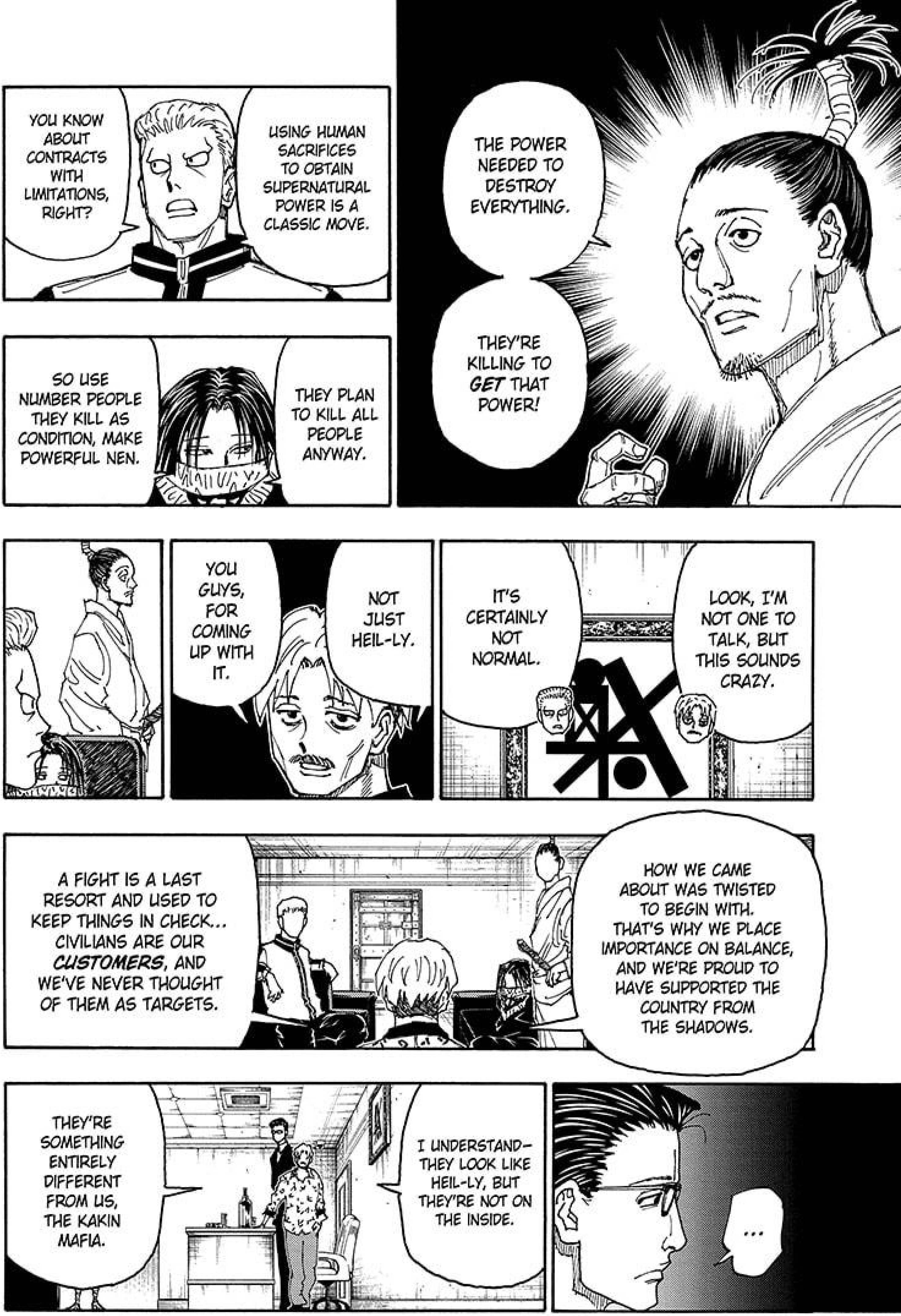

AFTER THAT, I TOOK THE FORM OF THE WOMAN I KILLED, TRICKED THE I.V. GUY, AND LED THEM TO THE MOVIE THEATER.
THEY'LL THINK SOMEONE ELSE KILLED HER AFTER THEY SPLIT UP... RIGHT? IT'LL WORK OUT. FROM THE I.V. GUY'S POINT OF VIEW, HER DEATH WOULDN'T BE CONNECTED TO MY TIFF WITH HER.
EVEN IF THEY FIND HER BODY, THE MAFIA PROBABLY WOULDN'T COME UPSTAIRS EN MASSE TO KILL HISOKA. PROBABLY... I, UH... THINK...
I DON'T KNOW! I SHOULD JUST ASK CHROLLO. BUT I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET PHINKS'S GROUP TO DEAL WITH HISOKA.
WE ALL KNOW CHROLLO IS HURTING OVER SHAL AND KORTOPI. AND HE'S TRYING TO ACT LIKE HE'S FINE BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT WE KNOW.
EVERYONE KNOWS HE WANTS TO SETTLE IT ONCE AND FOR ALL, BY HIMSELF THIS TIME...
...AND THAT THE "TREASURE" HE SEEKS ON THIS SHIP IS AN ABILITY THAT HE'LL NEED TO KILL HISOKA *FOR GOOD*...
THAT'S WHY EVERYONE WANTS TO KILL HISOKA FIRST...
...BEFORE CHROLLO CAN GET TO HIM.
CHROLLO... YOU'VE KEPT THE NO. 9 SPOT EMPTY THIS WHOLE TIME. WE ALL UNDERSTAND.
LET'S LET HISOKA BE THE LAST... AND CLOSE THE CURTAIN ON THIS PERFORMANCE.

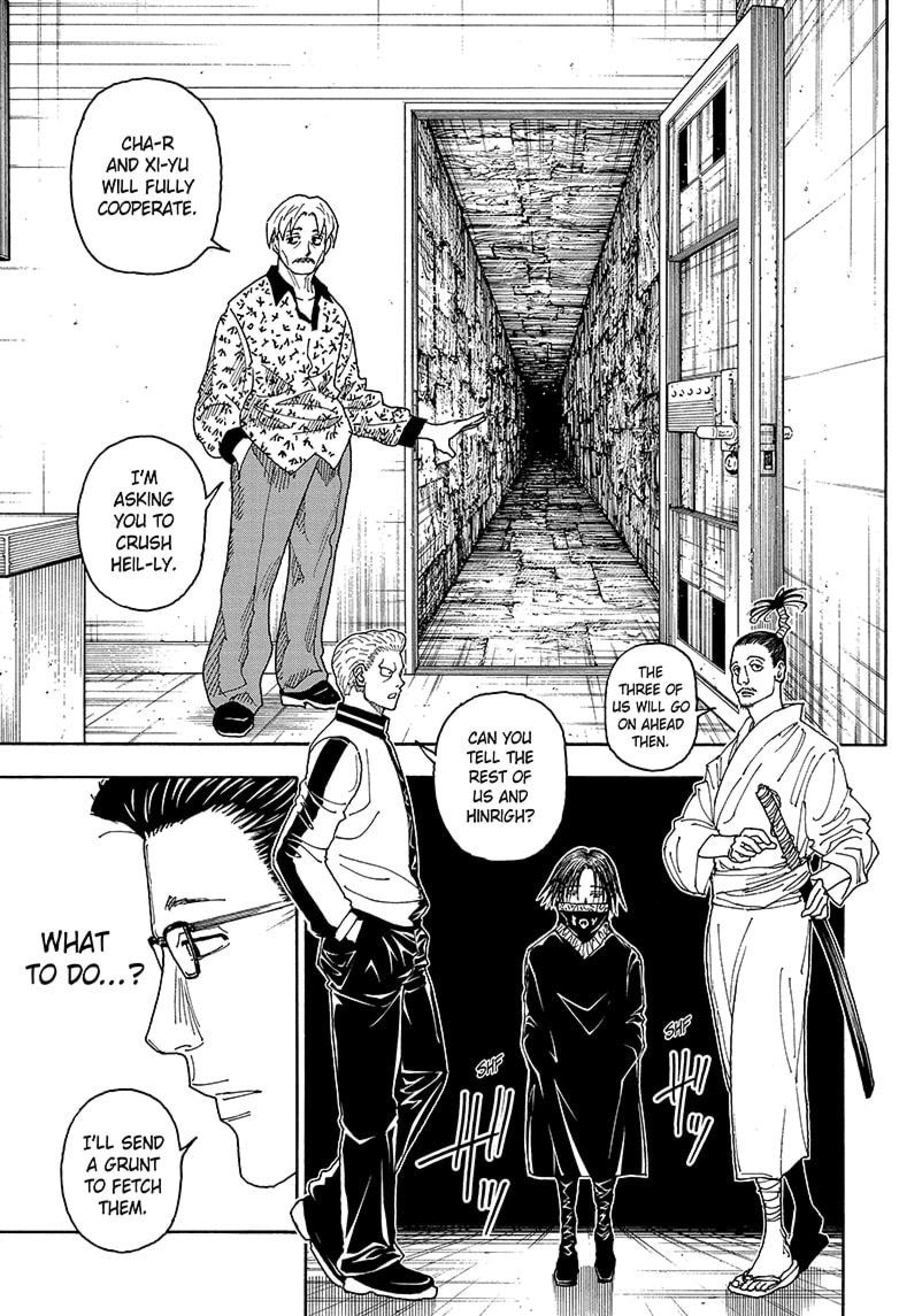

IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE THE BRUTAL MURDER OF MR. RISNORTH, THE CHAIRMAN OF "MOM'S HELP," THE CHARITY FOUNDATION DEDICATED TO HELPING CHILDREN. NO SUSPECTS HAVE EVER BEEN CAUGHT.
TODAY, WE LOOK BACK AT HIS CONTRIBUTIONS AND PAY OUR RESPECTS TO HIS GREATNESS. THERE HAS BEEN A GROWING PUBLIC OUTCRY DEMANDING THE IDENTIFICATION AND ARREST OF HIS MURDERER...
DIDN'T THEY INITIALLY REPORT THAT CREDIT HAD BEEN CLAIMED, BUT THEN WALKED IT BACK IN A REALLY WEIRD WAY?
YEAH?
MAYBE IT'S BAD IF THE GUY WHO DID IT GETS CAUGHT.
DARK WEB STUFF.
THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF A PHILANTHROPIST. HA HA!
WHO ARE THESE MORONS WHO TAKE WHAT THE MEDIA SAYS AT FACE VALUE?

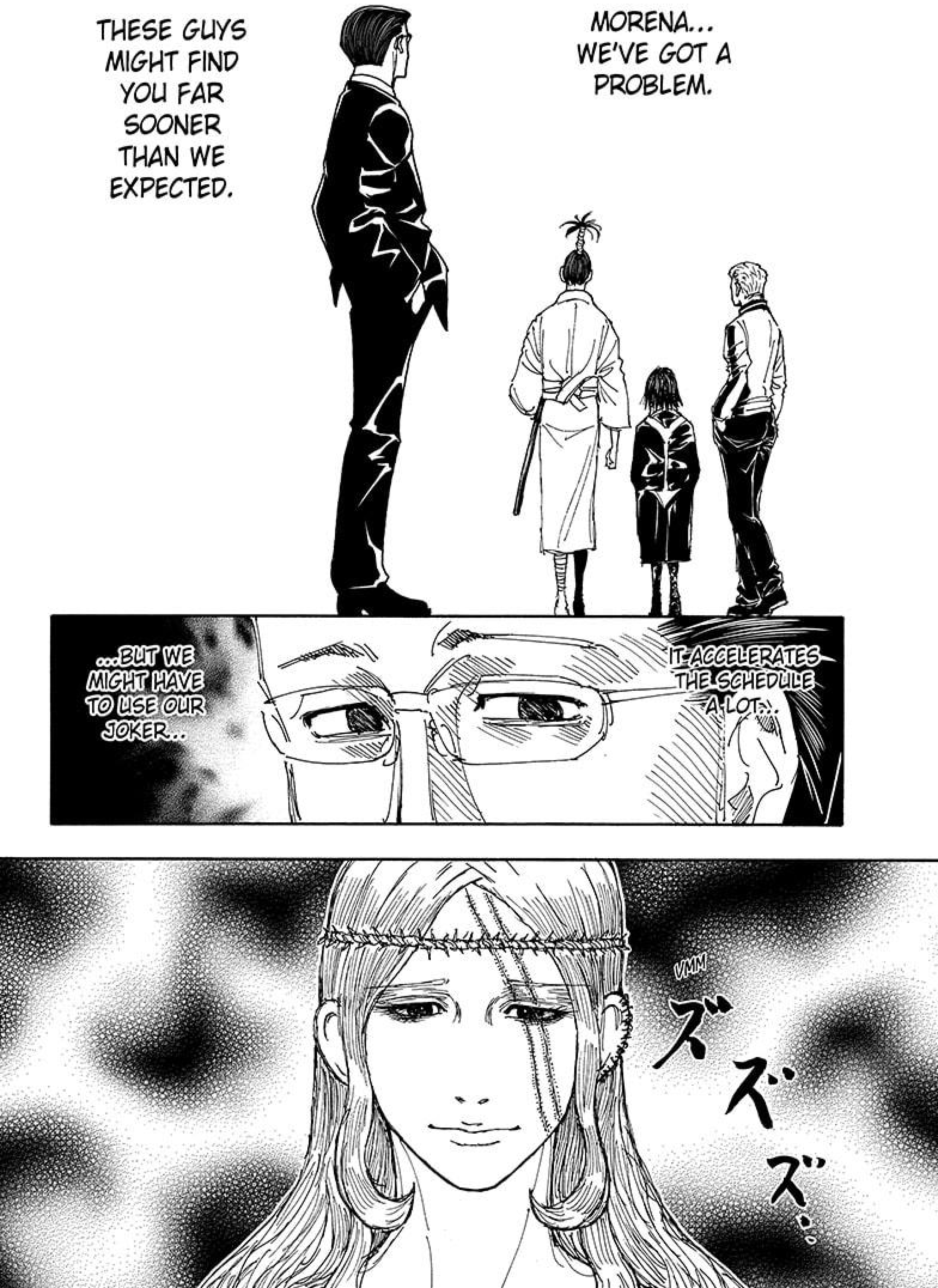

SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW?
ALL OF YOU GUYS HAVE KNOWN HEIL-LY FOR A LONG TIME, RIGHT?
YEAH.
NO.
THEIR NEW BOSS JUST RECENTLY TOOK OVER.
YEAH?
SO IT'S HARD TO PREDICT WHAT THEY'RE THINKING.
I SUPPOSE.
IF THEY'RE NOT EVEN A FUNCTIONAL MAFIA FAMILY, IT'S HONESTLY HARD TO NOTICE THAT SOMETHING'S OFF.
...
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
JUST THAT.
IS IT *REALLY* HEIL-LY ON THIS SHIP?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

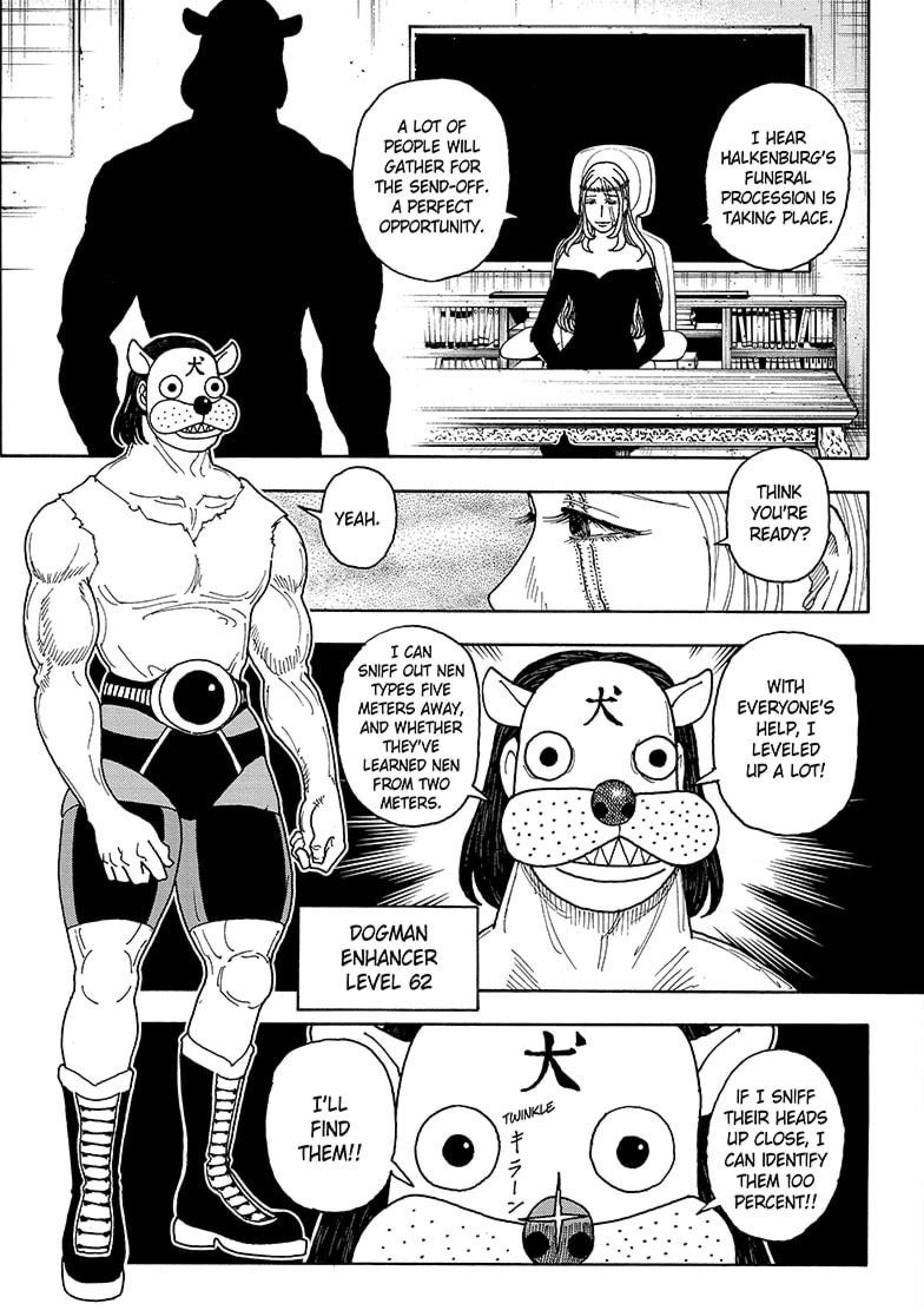

...
INTERESTING IDEA.
IF THEY'RE NOT HEIL-LY, THEN WHO ARE THEY?
THEY HAD THE OFFICIAL SUCCESSION CEREMONY. THE BOSS EVEN WENT, AS DID THE REST OF US.
BUT...
...IF YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY THE PREVIOUS BOSS WAS MANIPULATED WITH NEN AND KILLED...
WHAT'S THE CURRENT HEIL-LY BOSS LIKE?
A YOUNG WOMAN NAMED MORENA. A ROYAL DESCENDANT WITHOUT SUCCESSION RIGHTS.
THE KAKIN MAFIA BOSS TITLES ARE ALWAYS INHERITED BY A PERSON OF ROYAL BLOOD WHO HAS NO CLAIM TO THE THRONE.
SO IT'S NOT LIKE WE DON'T KNOW HER AT ALL.
BUT LIKE YOU SAY, WE'RE NOT SO CLOSE THAT WE KNOW WHAT SHE WANTS.
ARE THEY REALLY HEIL-LY? ON PAPER, YES. BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE AFTER.
DID YOU GUYS GET SOME SORT OF CLUE?
WE DIDN'T FIND ANYTHING CONCRETE...
...BUT WE DO KNOW SOME THINGS FROM FIGHTING THEM.

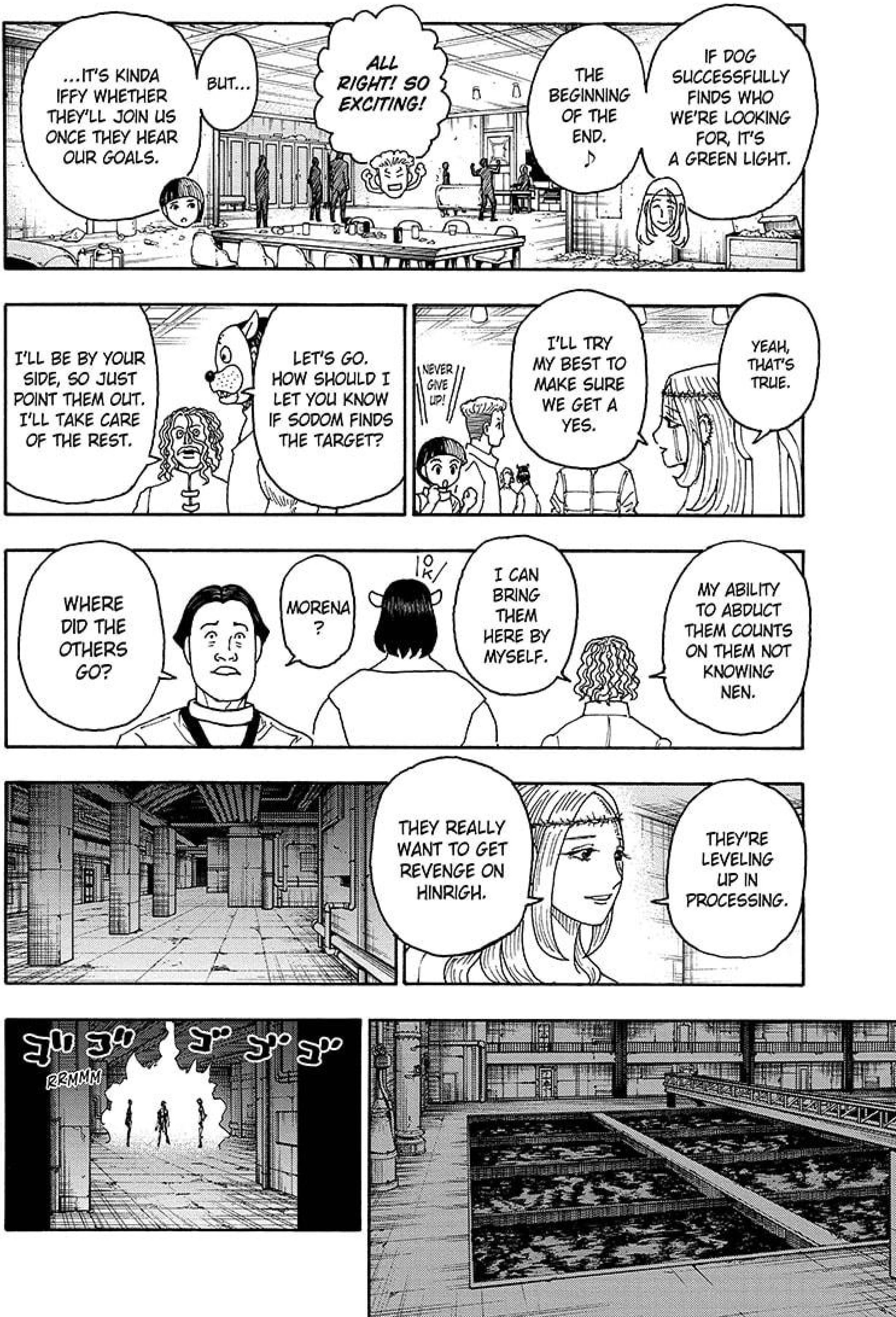

THEY *SEEM* TO BE DOING WHATEVER THEY WANT. CASE IN POINT, THE WALL GUY CAME OVER AND GOT HIMSELF KILLED...
BUT WHEN WE WENT TO THEIR HIDEOUT, THEY WERE ORGANIZED, AND THEIR BEHAVIOR SHOWED THEY WERE UNDER SOME LEADERSHIP.
THEIR LEADER DECIDES THE STRATEGY, AND SPECIFIC TACTICS ARE LEFT TO EACH OF THEM...
THAT'S *OUR* STYLE, AND THEY'RE USING THE SAME PLAYBOOK.
A: "?"
B: "?"
THE PROBLEM IS A: WHAT'S THEIR MOTIVATION? AND B: WHAT KIND OF ORDERS ARE THEY OPERATING UNDER?
IF THEY'RE TRYING TO "CRUSH THE OTHER FAMILIES," IT MAKES SENSE TO KILL THE OTHER MEMBERS.
BUT THEY'RE KILLING *CIVILIANS*. WHY?
WHO KNOWS?
MAYBE "A" IS SOMETHING ELSE.
EXACTLY!
HEIL-LY IS TRYING TO DESTROY *EVERYTHING*.
EVERYTHING?
YEAH... EVERYONE ABOARD THIS SHIP, INCLUDING THE ROYAL FAMILY. IN OTHER WORDS, *KAKIN ITSELF*!
THE SEALED CHAMBER THIS CRUISE SHIP PRESENTS IS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY! ALSO, THERE COULD BE MULTIPLE MOTIVATIONS.

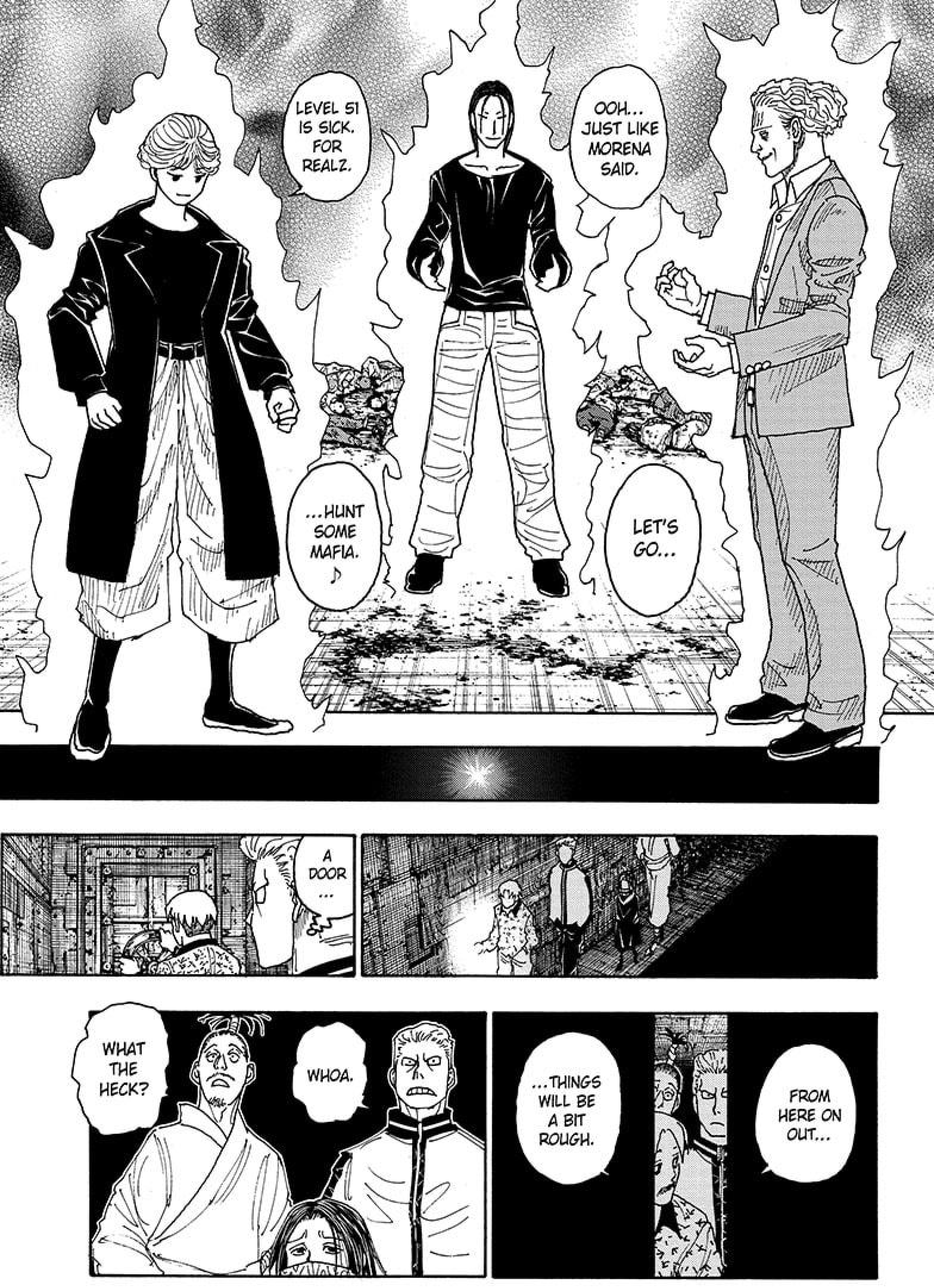

THE POWER NEEDED TO DESTROY EVERYTHING.
THEY'RE KILLING TO *GET* THAT POWER!
USING HUMAN SACRIFICES TO OBTAIN SUPERNATURAL POWER IS A CLASSIC MOVE.
YOU KNOW ABOUT CONTRACTS WITH LIMITATIONS, RIGHT?
THEY PLAN TO KILL ALL PEOPLE ANYWAY.
SO USE NUMBER PEOPLE THEY KILL AS CONDITION, MAKE POWERFUL NEN.
LOOK, I'M NOT ONE TO TALK, BUT THIS SOUNDS CRAZY.
IT'S CERTAINLY NOT NORMAL.
NOT JUST HEIL-LY.
YOU GUYS, FOR COMING UP WITH IT.
HOW WE CAME ABOUT WAS TWISTED TO BEGIN WITH. THAT'S WHY WE PLACE IMPORTANCE ON BALANCE, AND WE'RE PROUD TO HAVE SUPPORTED THE COUNTRY FROM THE SHADOWS.
A FIGHT IS A LAST RESORT AND USED TO KEEP THINGS IN CHECK... CIVILIANS ARE OUR *CUSTOMERS*, AND WE'VE NEVER THOUGHT OF THEM AS TARGETS.
...
I UNDERSTAND— THEY LOOK LIKE HEIL-LY, BUT THEY'RE NOT ON THE INSIDE.
THEY'RE SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM US, THE KAKIN MAFIA.


CHA-R AND XI-YU WILL FULLY COOPERATE.
I'M ASKING YOU TO CRUSH HEIL-LY.
THE THREE OF US WILL GO ON AHEAD THEN.
CAN YOU TELL THE REST OF US AND HINRIGH?
SHF
SHF
WHAT TO DO...?
I'LL SEND A GRUNT TO FETCH THEM.


MORENA... WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.
THESE GUYS MIGHT FIND YOU FAR SOONER THAN WE EXPECTED.
IT ACCELERATES THE SCHEDULE A LOT...
...BUT WE MIGHT HAVE TO USE OUR JOKER...
VMM
ズズズ…。


I HEAR HALKENBURG'S FUNERAL PROCESSION IS TAKING PLACE.
A LOT OF PEOPLE WILL GATHER FOR THE SEND-OFF. A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY.
THINK YOU'RE READY?
YEAH.
WITH EVERYONE'S HELP, I LEVELED UP A LOT!
I CAN SNIFF OUT NEN TYPES FIVE METERS AWAY, AND WHETHER THEY'VE LEARNED NEN FROM TWO METERS.
DOGMAN ENHANCER LEVEL 62
IF I SNIFF THEIR HEADS UP CLOSE, I CAN IDENTIFY THEM 100 PERCENT!!
TWINKLE キラーン
I'LL FIND THEM!!


IF DOG SUCCESSFULLY FINDS WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR, IT'S A GREEN LIGHT.
THE BEGINNING OF THE END. ♪
ALL RIGHT! SO EXCITING!
BUT...
...IT'S KINDA IFFY WHETHER THEY'LL JOIN US ONCE THEY HEAR OUR GOALS.
YEAH, THAT'S TRUE.
I'LL TRY MY BEST TO MAKE SURE WE GET A YES.
NEVER GIVE UP!
LET'S GO. HOW SHOULD I LET YOU KNOW IF SODOM FINDS THE TARGET?
I'LL BE BY YOUR SIDE, SO JUST POINT THEM OUT. I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
MY ABILITY TO ABDUCT THEM COUNTS ON THEM NOT KNOWING NEN.
I CAN BRING THEM HERE BY MYSELF.
OK
MORENA?
WHERE DID THE OTHERS GO?
THEY'RE LEVELING UP IN PROCESSING.
THEY REALLY WANT TO GET REVENGE ON HINRIGH.
ゴゴゴゴゴ
RRMMM

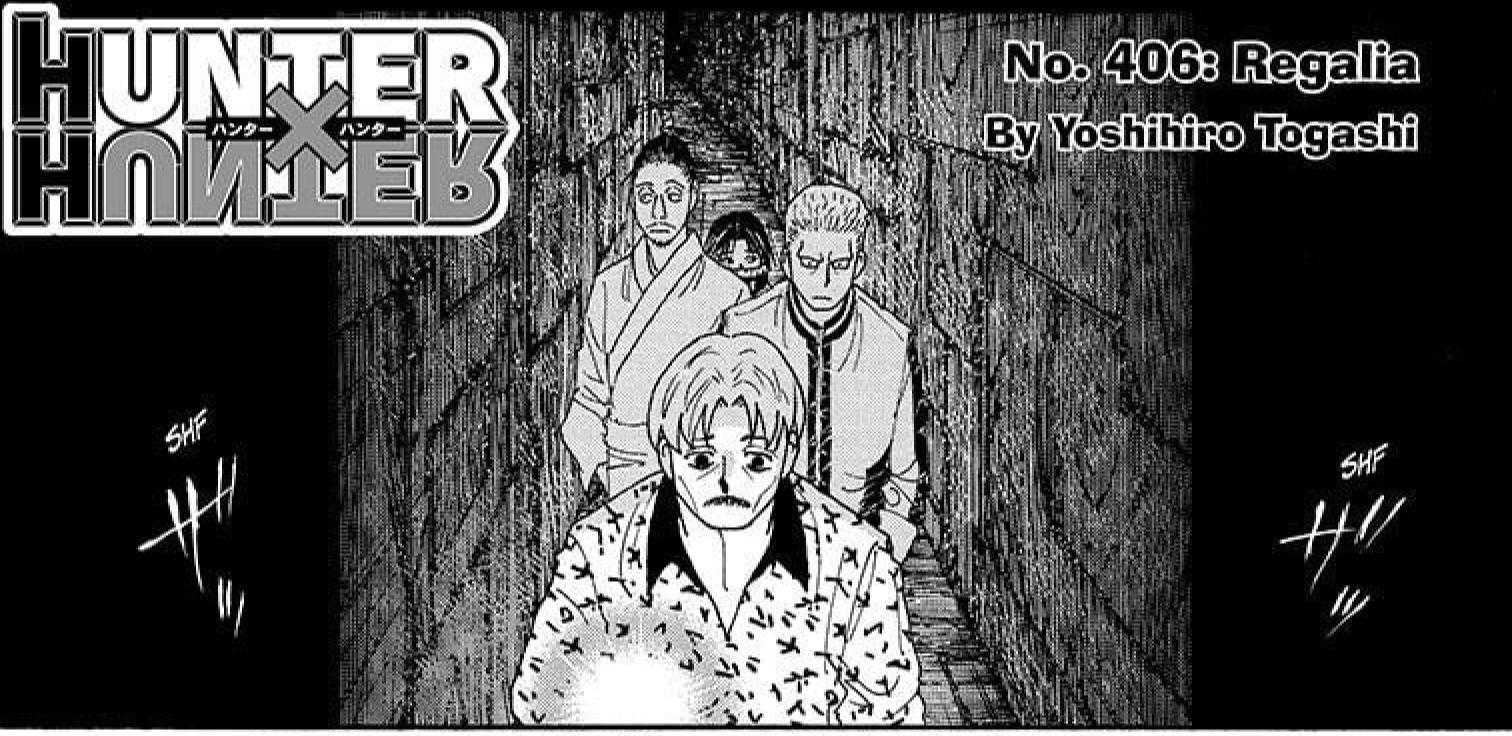

OOH... JUST LIKE MORENA SAID.
LEVEL 51 IS SICK. FOR REALZ.
LET'S GO...
...HUNT SOME MAFIA. ♪
A DOOR ...
FROM HERE ON OUT...
...THINGS WILL BE A BIT ROUGH.
WHOA.
WHAT THE HECK?

To be continued!

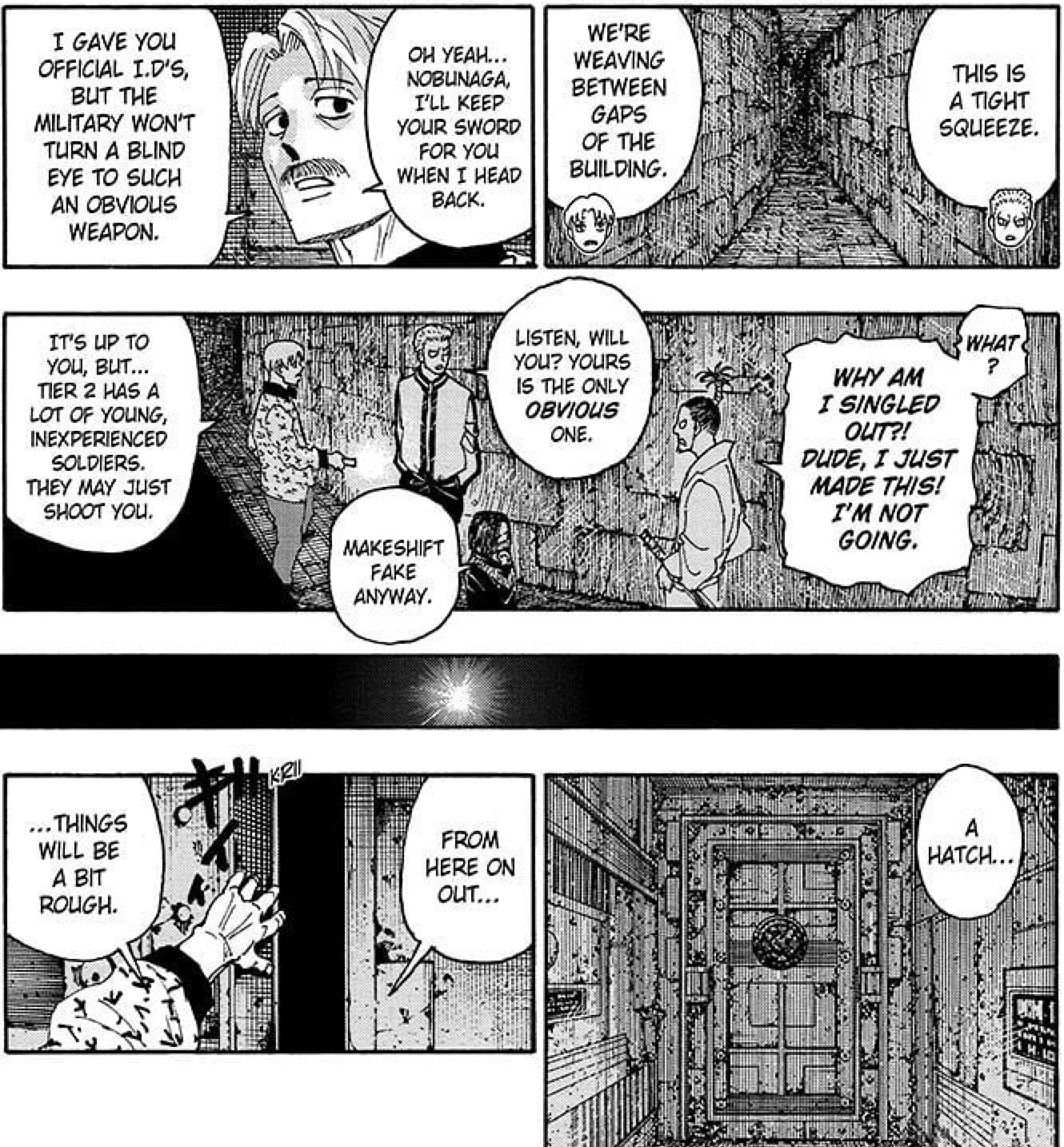
HUNTER×HUNTER

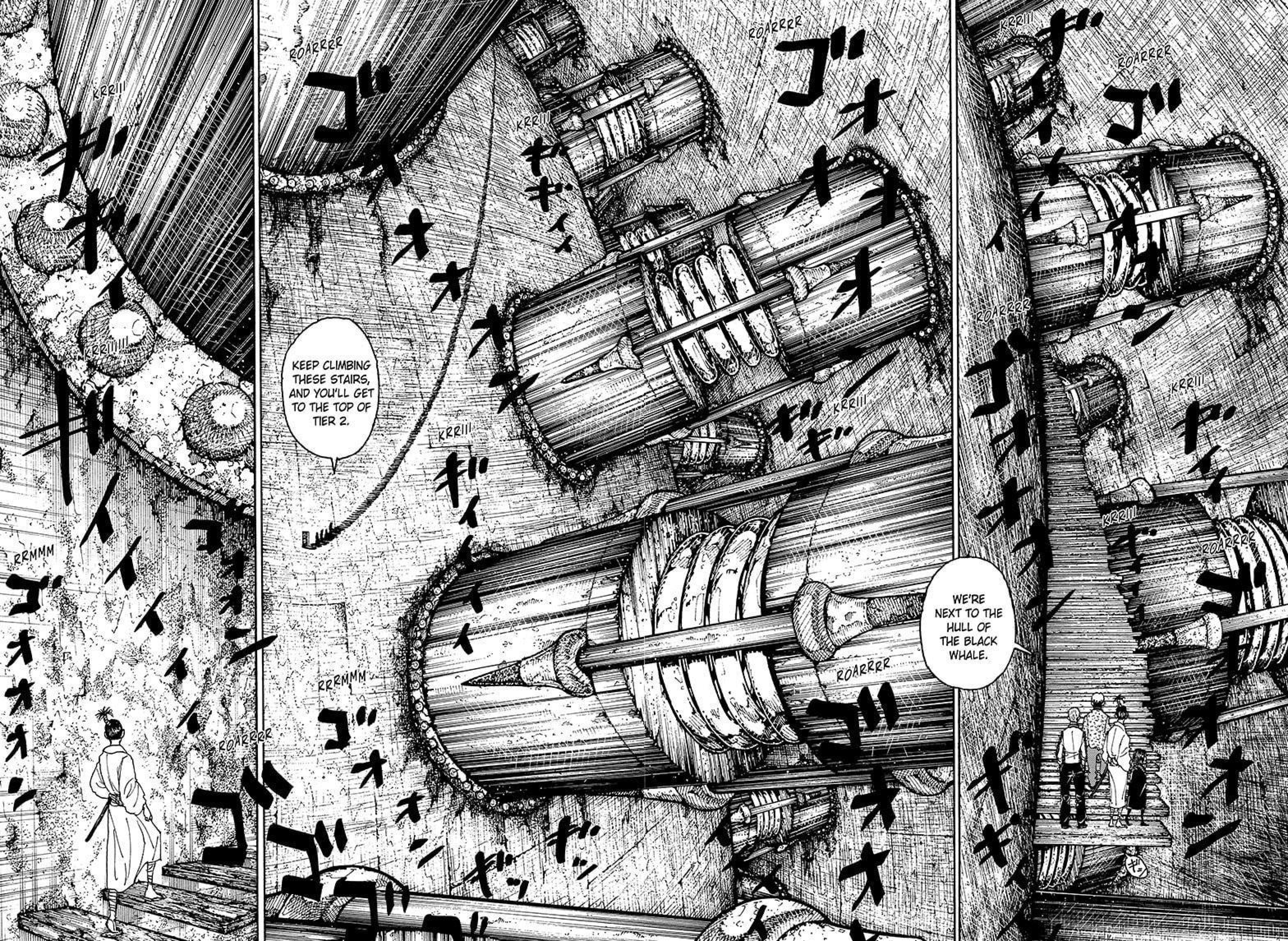
No. 406: Regalia

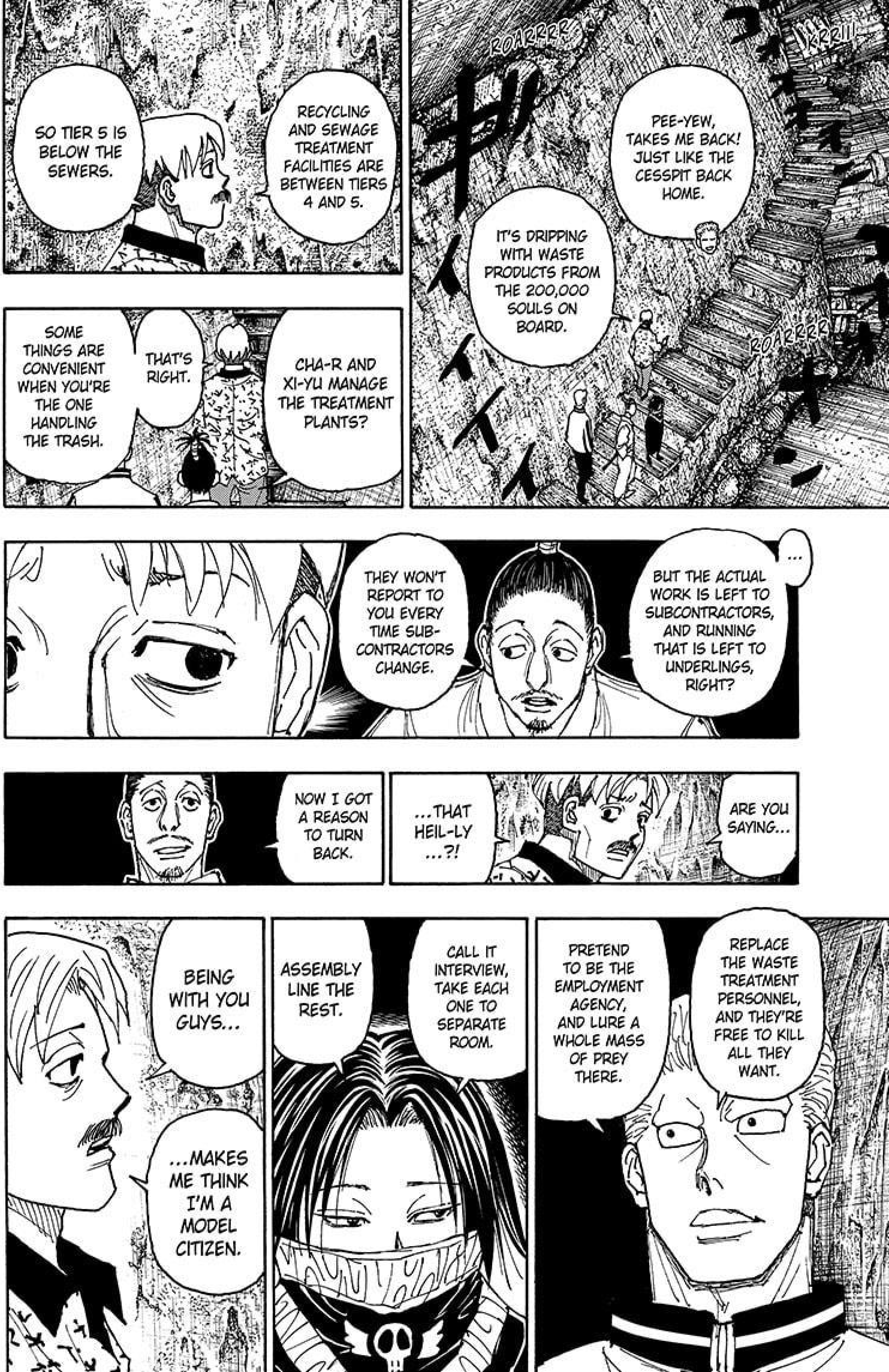
By Yoshihiro Togashi

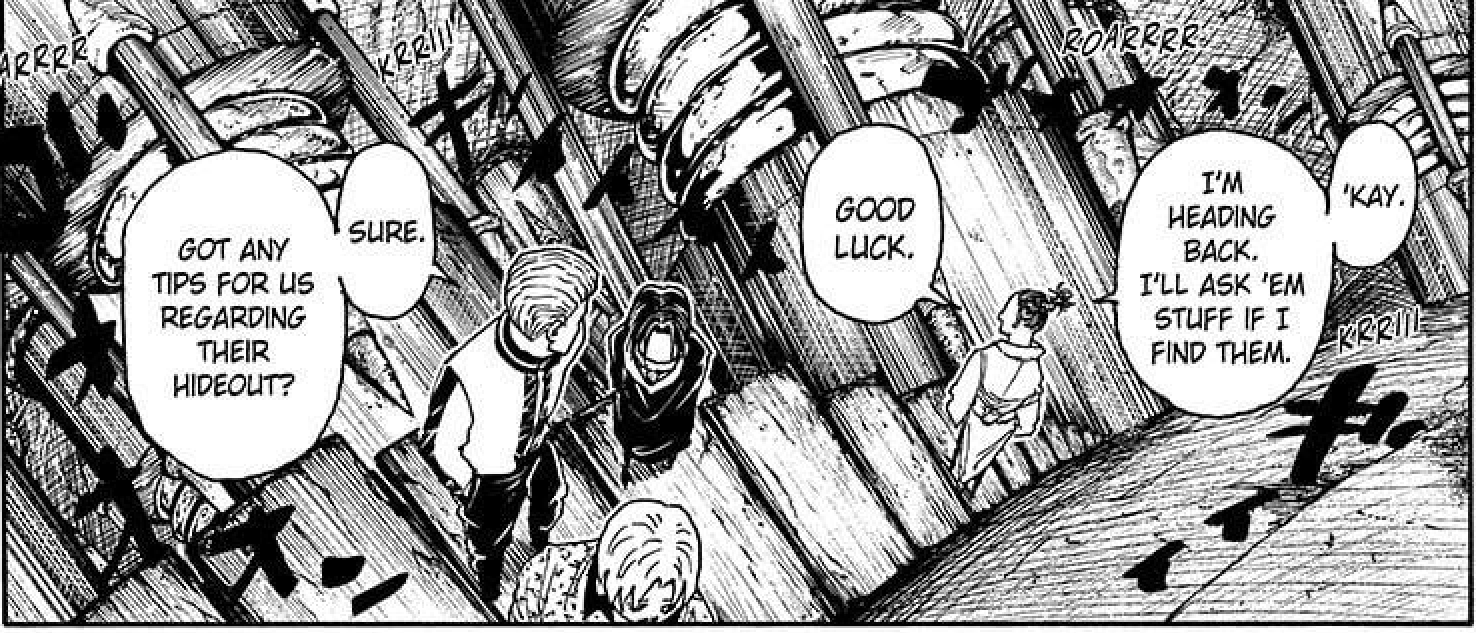


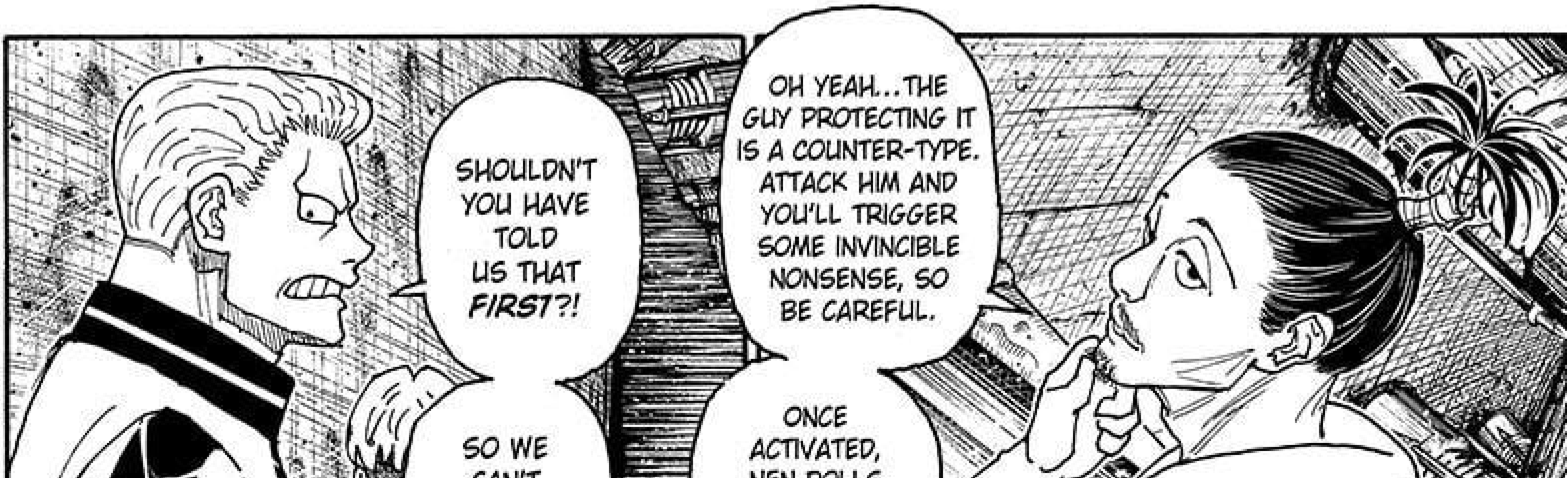
Translation: Lillian Olsen   Lettering: Mark McMurray

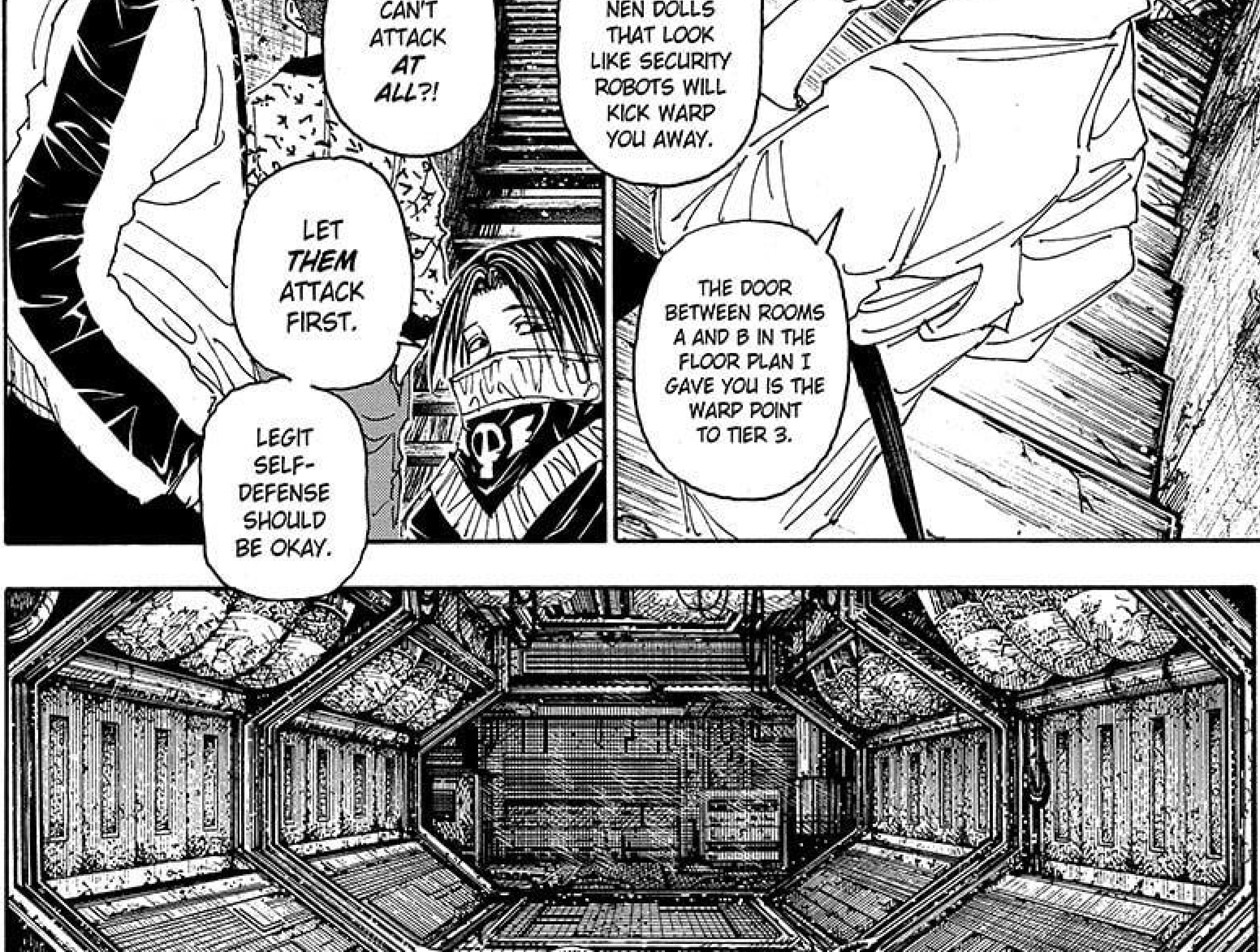

THIS IS A TIGHT SQUEEZE.
WE'RE WEAVING BETWEEN GAPS OF THE BUILDING.
OH YEAH... NOBUNAGA, I'LL KEEP YOUR SWORD FOR YOU WHEN I HEAD BACK.
I GAVE YOU OFFICIAL I.D'S, BUT THE MILITARY WON'T TURN A BLIND EYE TO SUCH AN OBVIOUS WEAPON.
WHAT?
WHY AM I SINGLED OUT?! DUDE, I JUST MADE THIS! I'M NOT GOING.
LISTEN, WILL YOU? YOURS IS THE ONLY OBVIOUS ONE.
MAKESHIFT FAKE ANYWAY.
IT'S UP TO YOU, BUT... TIER 2 HAS A LOT OF YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED SOLDIERS. THEY MAY JUST SHOOT YOU.
A HATCH...
KRII
FROM HERE ON OUT...
...THINGS WILL BE A BIT ROUGH.

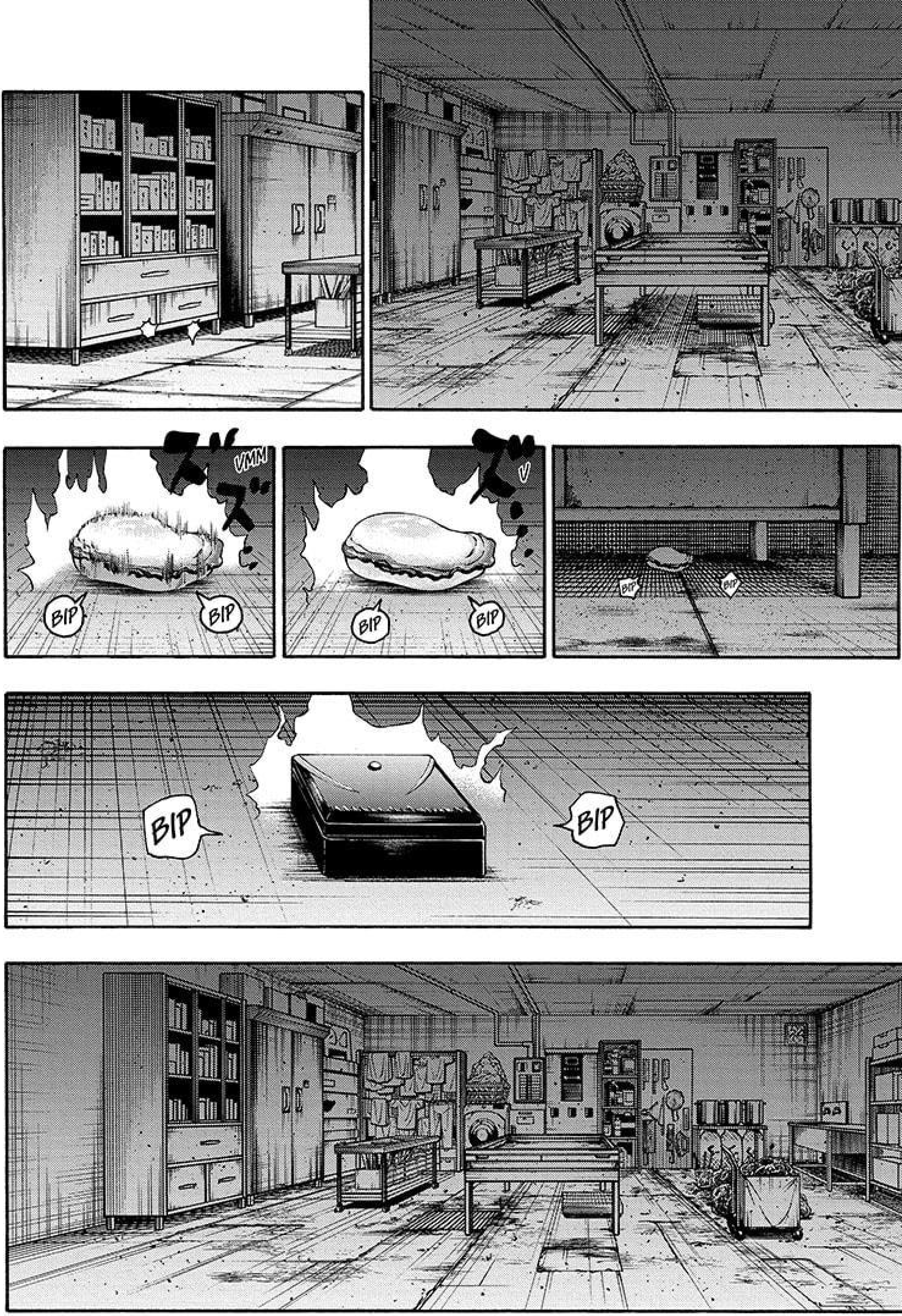

KRRIII
ROARRRR
ROARRRR
KRRIII
WE'RE NEXT TO THE HULL OF THE BLACK WHALE.
ROARRRR
ROARRRR
KRRIII
KRRIII
ROARRRR
KRRIII
KRRIII
KEEP CLIMBING THESE STAIRS, AND YOU'LL GET TO THE TOP OF TIER 2.
KRRIII
RRRMMM
KRRIII
KRRIIIII
RRMMM
ROARRRR


KRRR!!
ROARRRR
PEE-YEW, TAKES ME BACK! JUST LIKE THE CESSPIT BACK HOME.
ROARRRR
IT'S DRIPPING WITH WASTE PRODUCTS FROM THE 200,000 SOULS ON BOARD.
RECYCLING AND SEWAGE TREATMENT FACILITIES ARE BETWEEN TIERS 4 AND 5.
SO TIER 5 IS BELOW THE SEWERS.
CHA-R AND XI-YU MANAGE THE TREATMENT PLANTS?
THAT'S RIGHT.
SOME THINGS ARE CONVENIENT WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE HANDLING THE TRASH.
...
BUT THE ACTUAL WORK IS LEFT TO SUBCONTRACTORS, AND RUNNING THAT IS LEFT TO UNDERLINGS, RIGHT?
THEY WON'T REPORT TO YOU EVERY TIME SUB-CONTRACTORS CHANGE.
ARE YOU SAYING...
...THAT HEIL-LY ...?!
NOW I GOT A REASON TO TURN BACK.
REPLACE THE WASTE TREATMENT PERSONNEL, AND THEY'RE FREE TO KILL ALL THEY WANT.
PRETEND TO BE THE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY, AND LURE A WHOLE MASS OF PREY THERE.
CALL IT INTERVIEW, TAKE EACH ONE TO SEPARATE ROOM.
ASSEMBLY LINE THE REST.
BEING WITH YOU GUYS...
...MAKES ME THINK I'M A MODEL CITIZEN.


ROARRRR
KRRII
I'M HEADING BACK. I'LL ASK 'EM STUFF IF I FIND THEM.
'KAY.
GOOD LUCK.
GOT ANY TIPS FOR US REGARDING THEIR HIDEOUT?
SURE.
KRRII
ROARRRR


OH YEAH...THE GUY PROTECTING IT IS A COUNTER-TYPE. ATTACK HIM AND YOU'LL TRIGGER SOME INVINCIBLE NONSENSE, SO BE CAREFUL.
ONCE ACTIVATED, NEN DOLLS THAT LOOK LIKE SECURITY ROBOTS WILL KICK WARP YOU AWAY.
THE DOOR BETWEEN ROOMS A AND B IN THE FLOOR PLAN I GAVE YOU IS THE WARP POINT TO TIER 3.
SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE TOLD US THAT *FIRST*?!
SO WE CAN'T ATTACK *AT ALL*?!
LET *THEM* ATTACK FIRST.
LEGIT SELF-DEFENSE SHOULD BE OKAY.




BIP
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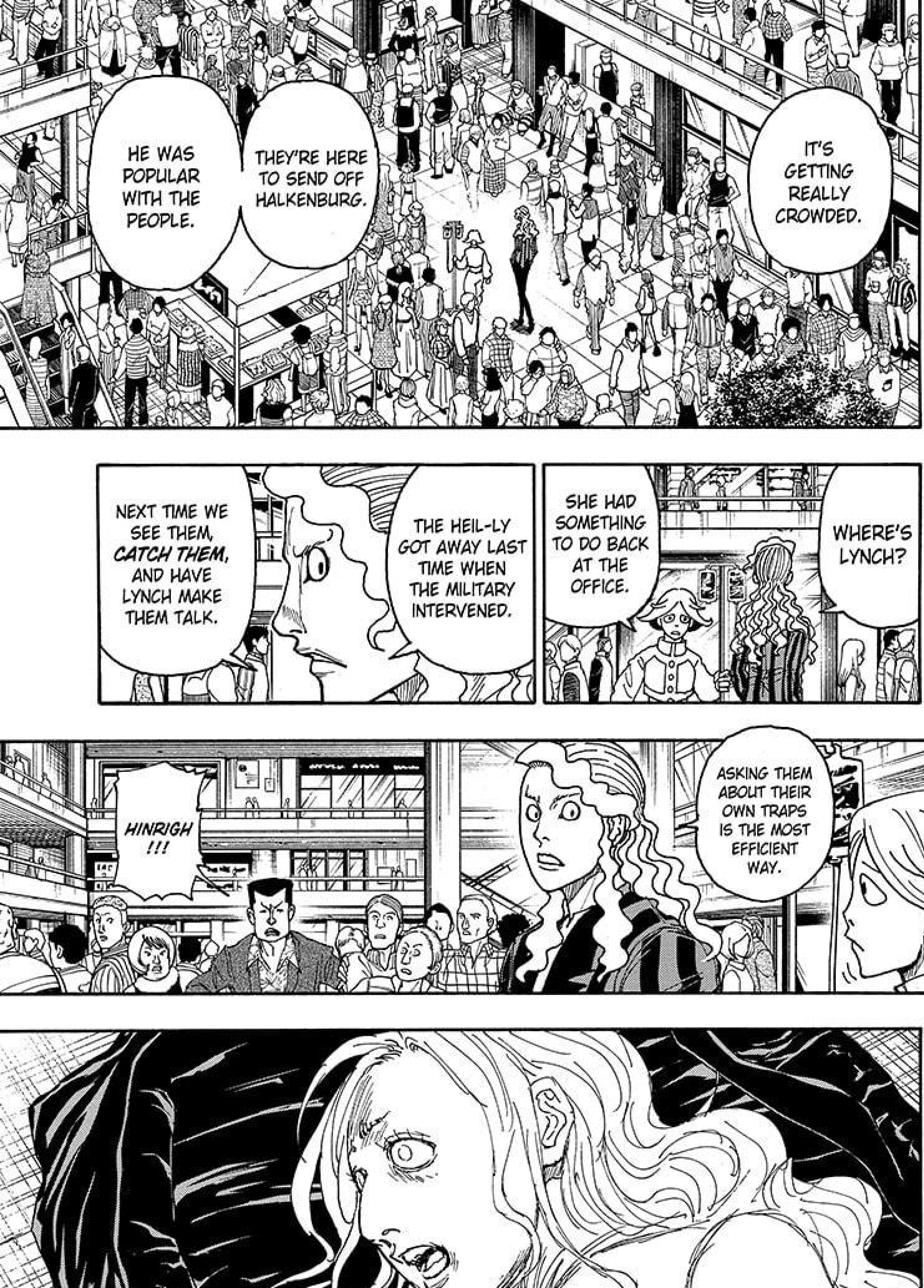
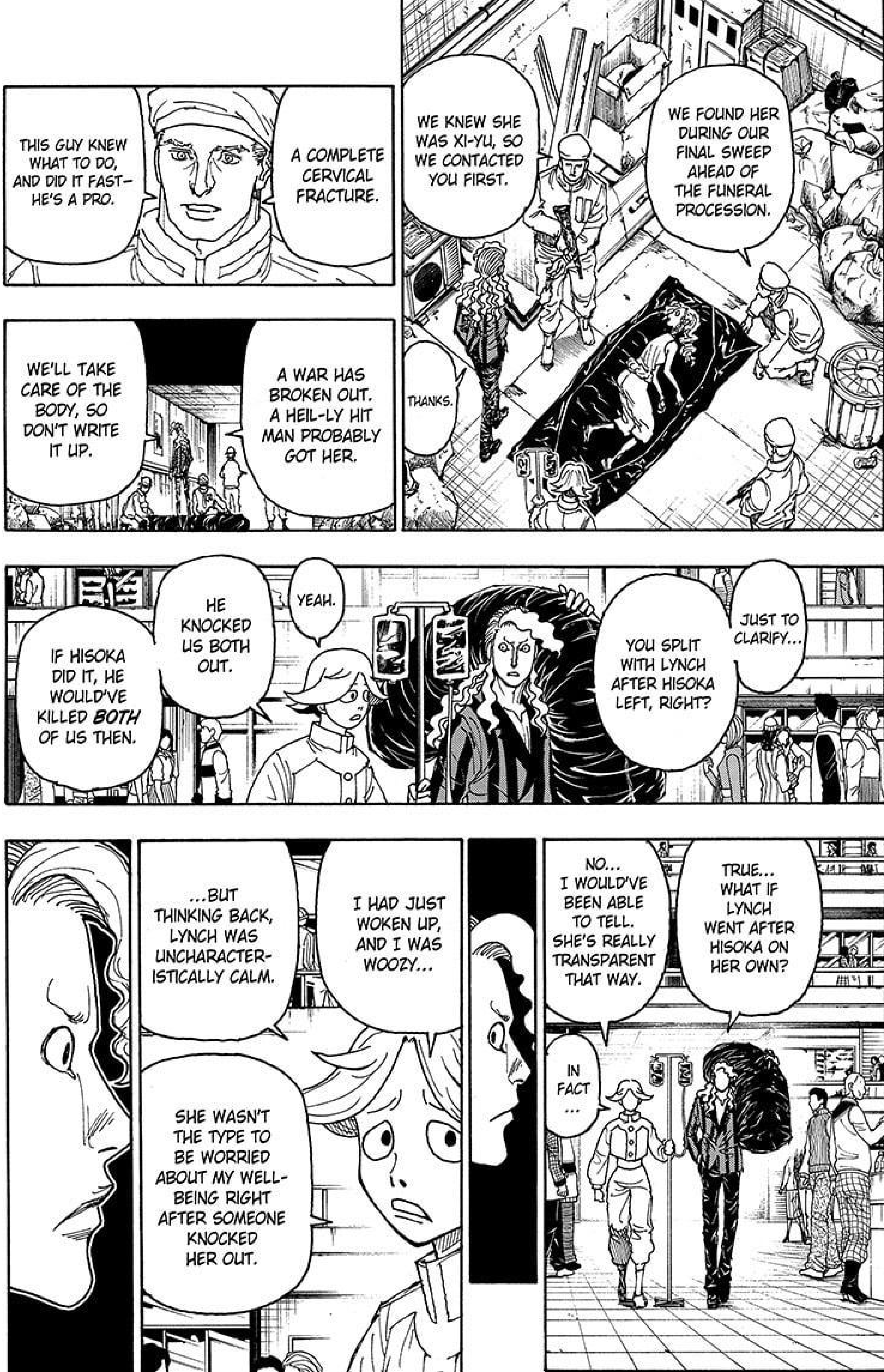
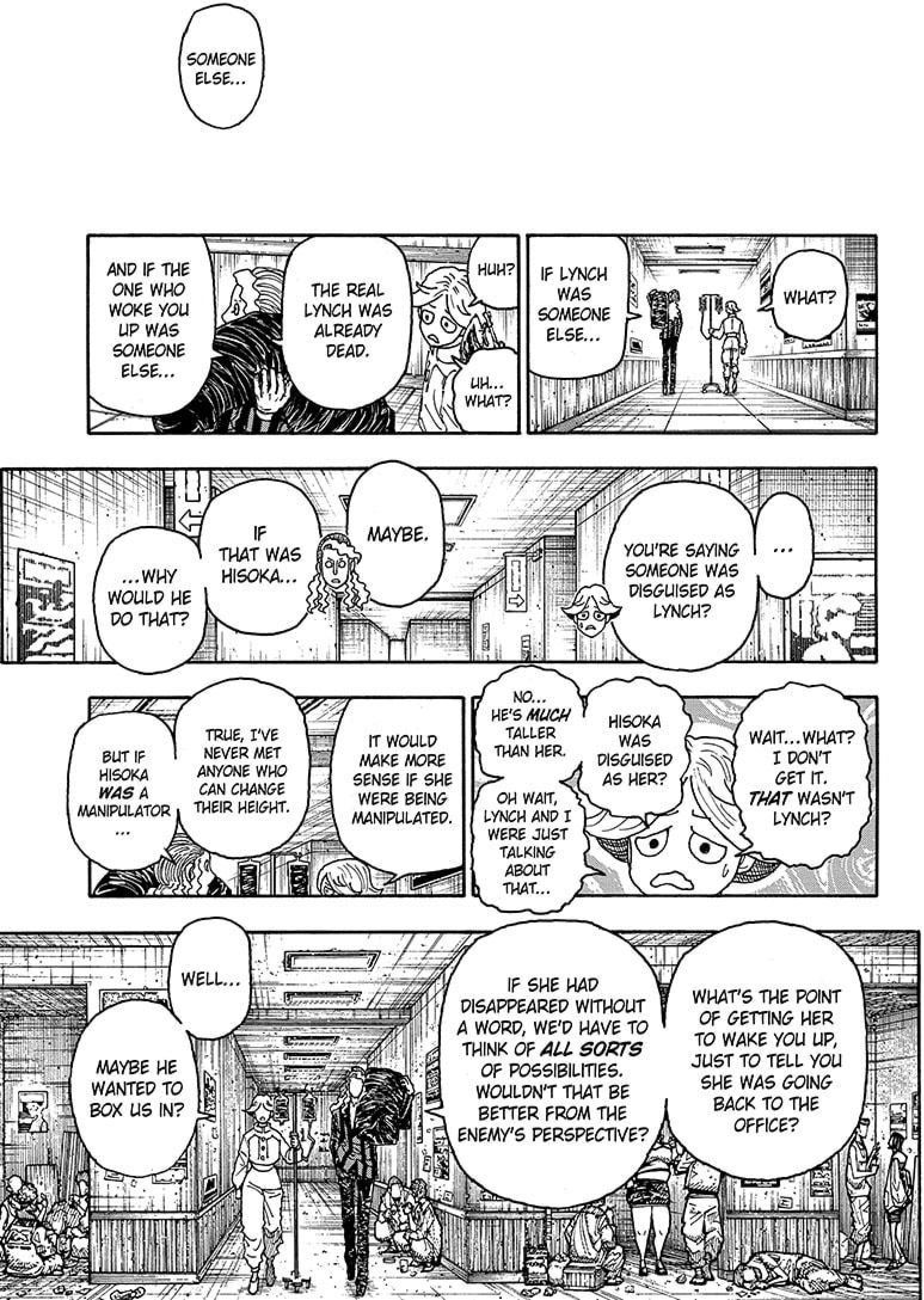
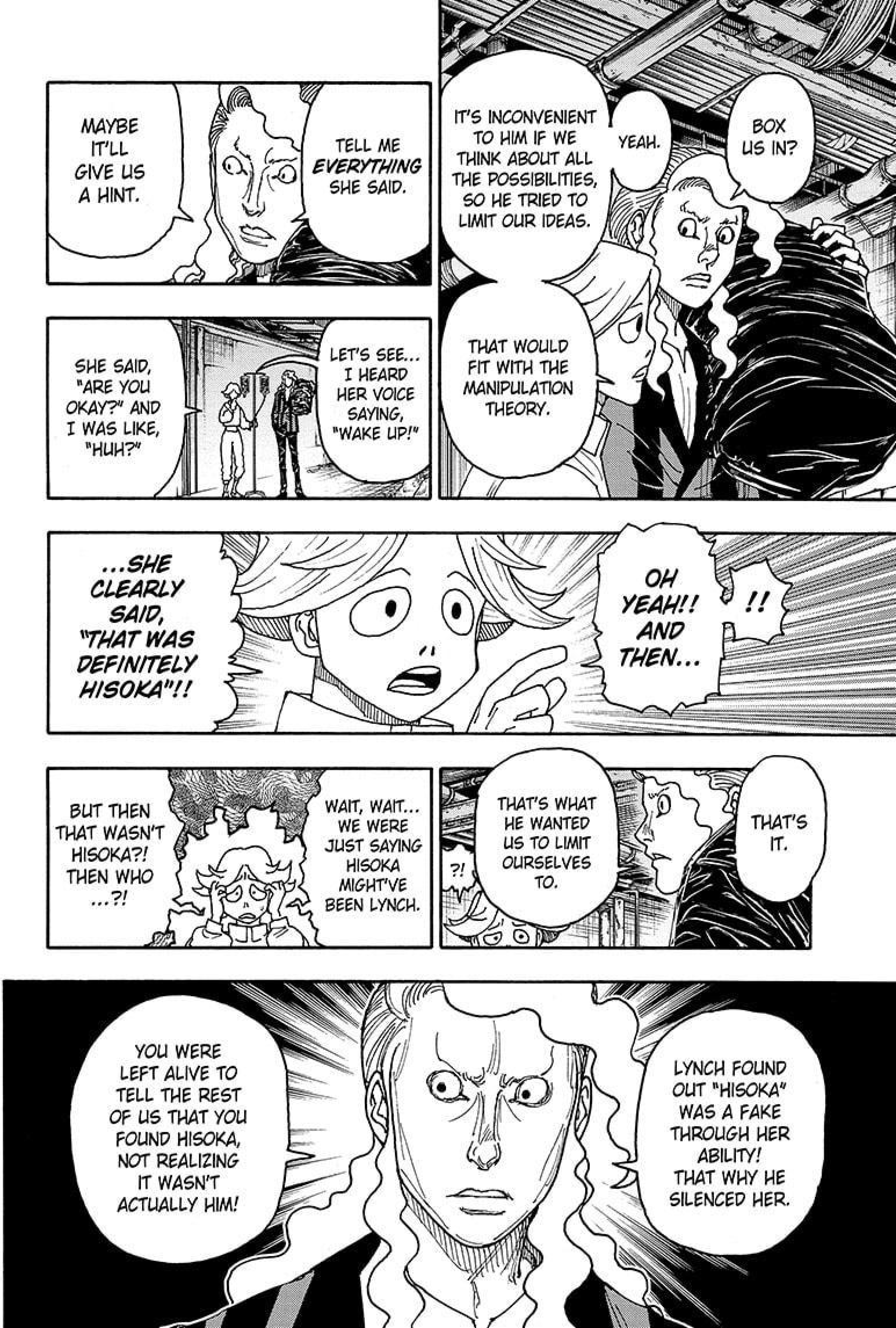
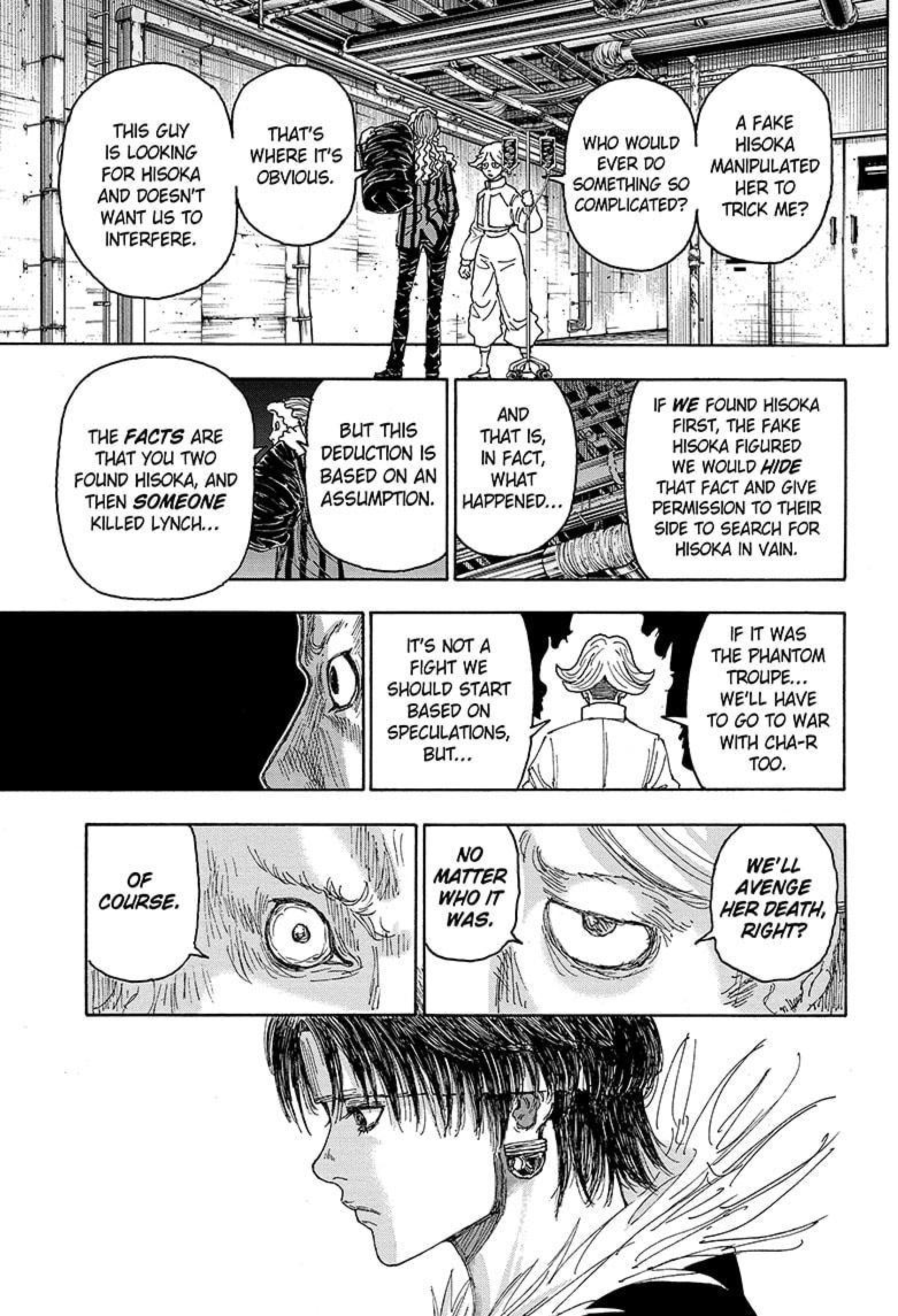
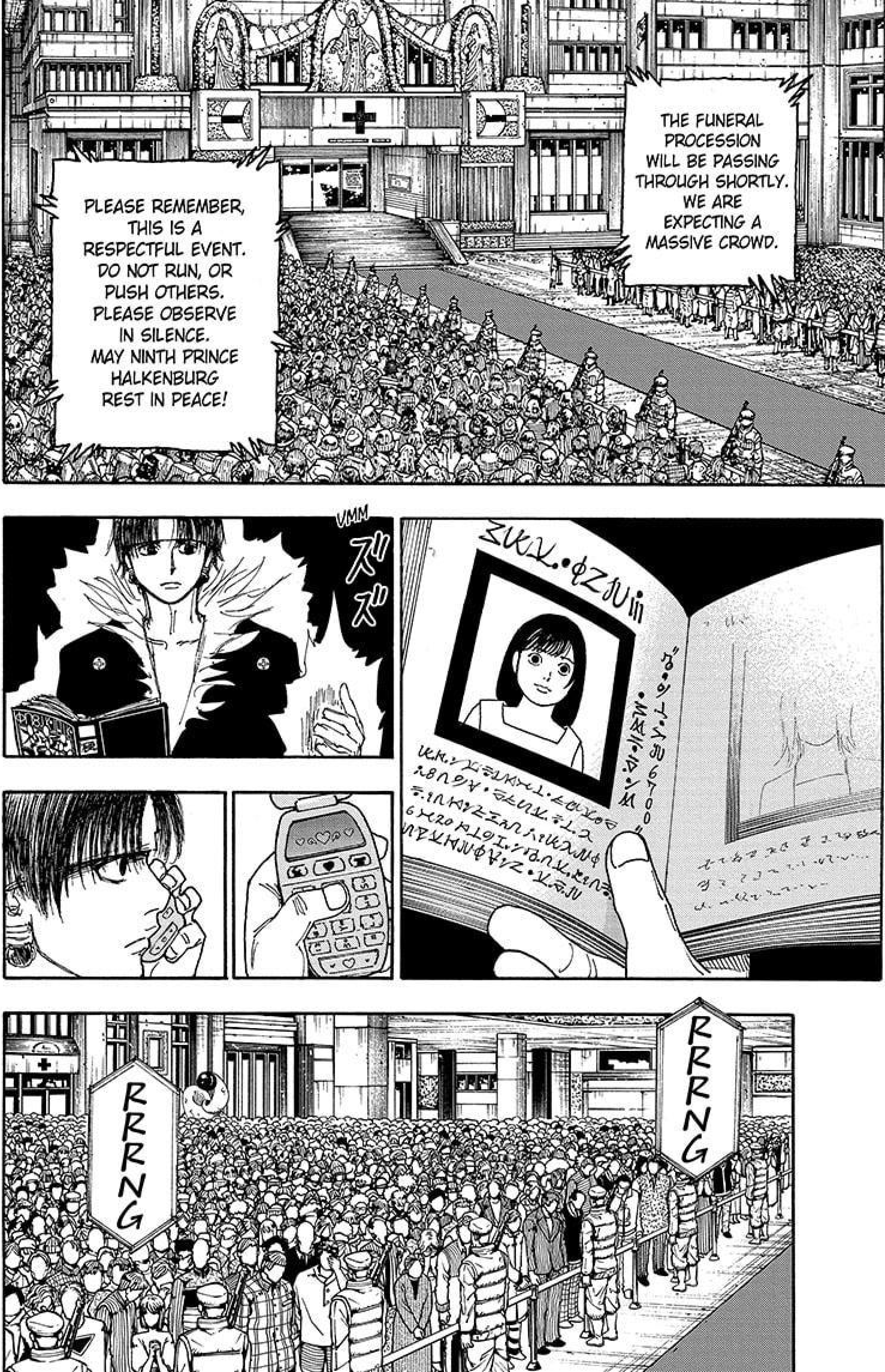

IT'S GETTING REALLY CROWDED.
THEY'RE HERE TO SEND OFF HALKENBURG.
HE WAS POPULAR WITH THE PEOPLE.
WHERE'S LYNCH?
SHE HAD SOMETHING TO DO BACK AT THE OFFICE.
THE HEIL-LY GOT AWAY LAST TIME WHEN THE MILITARY INTERVENED.
NEXT TIME WE SEE THEM, *CATCH THEM*, AND HAVE LYNCH MAKE THEM TALK.
ASKING THEM ABOUT THEIR OWN TRAPS IS THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY.
HINRIGH!!!

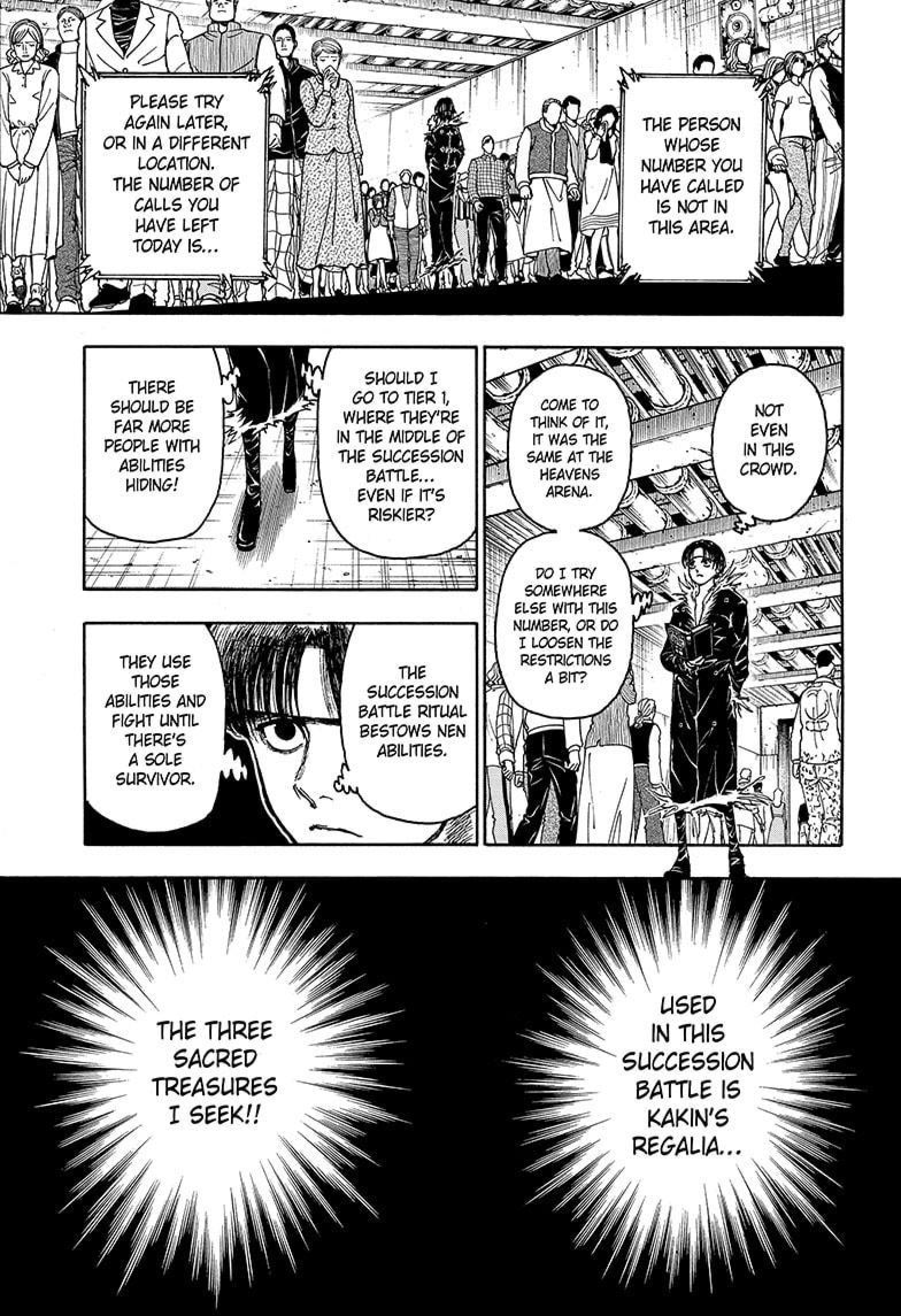

WE FOUND HER DURING OUR FINAL SWEEP AHEAD OF THE FUNERAL PROCESSION.
WE KNEW SHE WAS XI-YU, SO WE CONTACTED YOU FIRST.
THANKS.
A COMPLETE CERVICAL FRACTURE.
THIS GUY KNEW WHAT TO DO, AND DID IT FAST—HE'S A PRO.
A WAR HAS BROKEN OUT. A HEIL-LY HIT MAN PROBABLY GOT HER.
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE BODY, SO DON'T WRITE IT UP.
JUST TO CLARIFY...
YOU SPLIT WITH LYNCH AFTER HISOKA LEFT, RIGHT?
YEAH.
HE KNOCKED US BOTH OUT.
IF HISOKA DID IT, HE WOULD'VE KILLED *BOTH* OF US THEN.
TRUE... WHAT IF LYNCH WENT AFTER HISOKA ON HER OWN?
NO... I WOULD'VE BEEN ABLE TO TELL. SHE'S REALLY TRANSPARENT THAT WAY.
IN FACT...
I HAD JUST WOKEN UP, AND I WAS WOOZY...
...BUT THINKING BACK, LYNCH WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY CALM.
SHE WASN'T THE TYPE TO BE WORRIED ABOUT MY WELL-BEING RIGHT AFTER SOMEONE KNOCKED HER OUT.

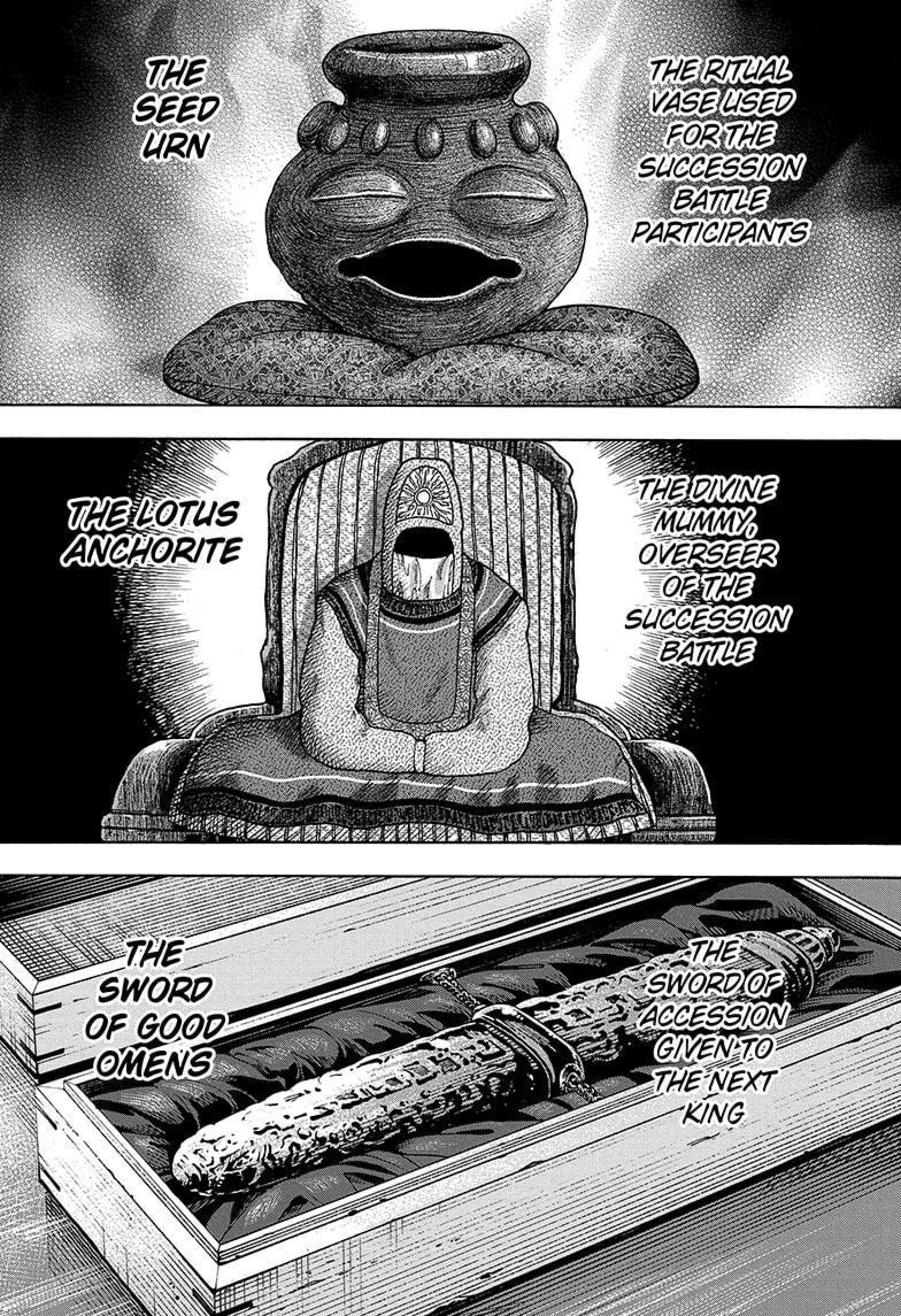

SOMEONE ELSE...
WHAT?
IF LYNCH WAS SOMEONE ELSE...
HUH?
UH... WHAT?
THE REAL LYNCH WAS ALREADY DEAD.
AND IF THE ONE WHO WOKE YOU UP WAS SOMEONE ELSE...
...
YOU'RE SAYING SOMEONE WAS DISGUISED AS LYNCH?
MAYBE.
IF THAT WAS HISOKA...
...WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?
WAIT...WHAT? I DON'T GET IT. *THAT* WASN'T LYNCH?
HISOKA WAS DISGUISED AS HER?
NO... HE'S *MUCH* TALLER THAN HER.
OH WAIT, LYNCH AND I WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT THAT...
IT WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE IF SHE WERE BEING MANIPULATED.
TRUE, I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE WHO CAN CHANGE THEIR HEIGHT.
BUT IF HISOKA *WAS* A MANIPULATOR ...
WHAT'S THE POINT OF GETTING HER TO WAKE YOU UP, JUST TO TELL YOU SHE WAS GOING BACK TO THE OFFICE?
IF SHE HAD DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A WORD, WE'D HAVE TO THINK OF *ALL SORTS* OF POSSIBILITIES. WOULDN'T THAT BE BETTER FROM THE ENEMY'S PERSPECTIVE?
WELL...
MAYBE HE WANTED TO BOX US IN?

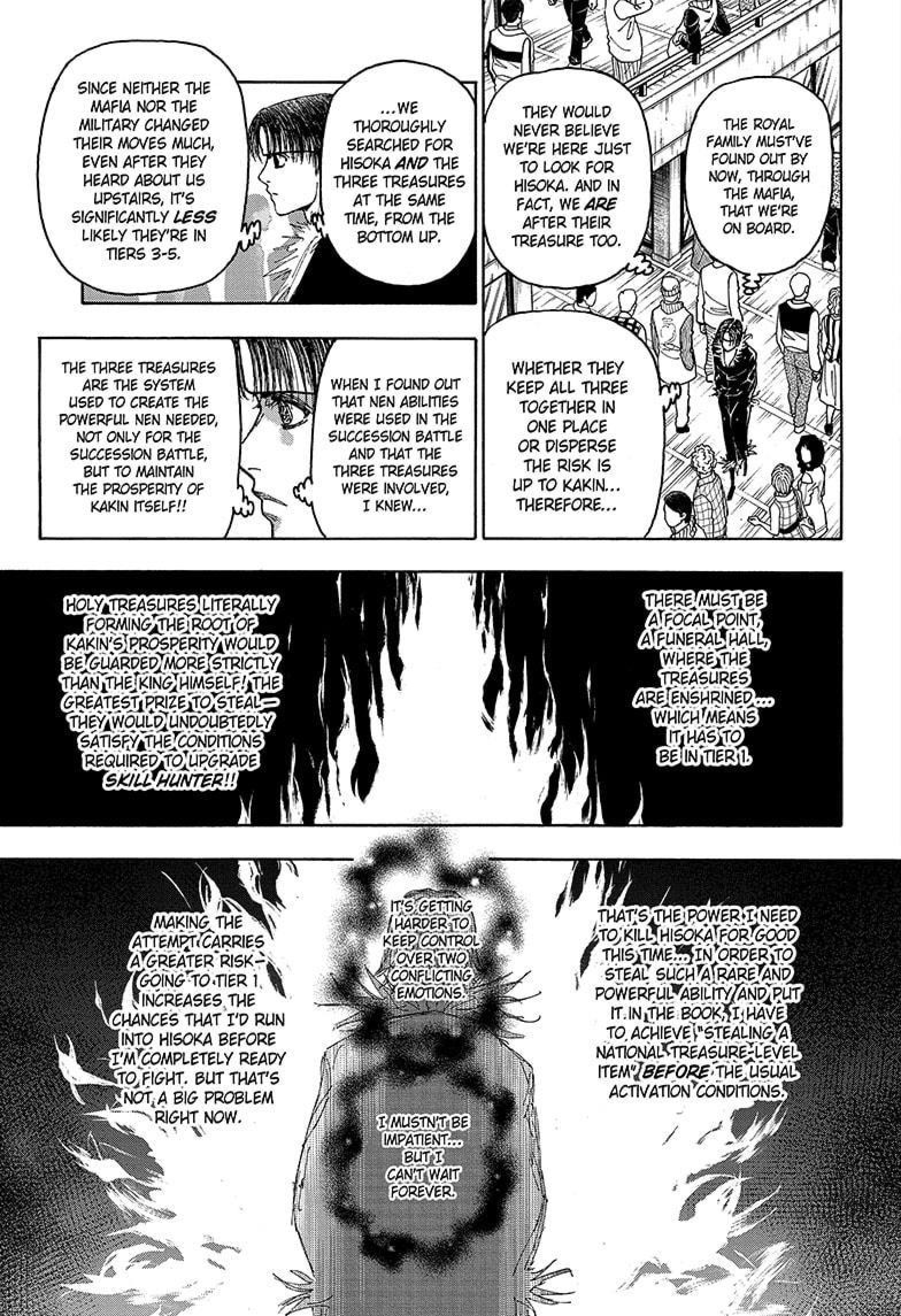

BOX US IN?
YEAH.
IT'S INCONVENIENT TO HIM IF WE THINK ABOUT ALL THE POSSIBILITIES, SO HE TRIED TO LIMIT OUR IDEAS.
THAT WOULD FIT WITH THE MANIPULATION THEORY.
TELL ME *EVERYTHING* SHE SAID.
MAYBE IT'LL GIVE US A HINT.
LET'S SEE... I HEARD HER VOICE SAYING, "WAKE UP!"
SHE SAID, "ARE YOU OKAY?" AND I WAS LIKE, "HUH?"
!!
OH YEAH!! AND THEN...
...SHE CLEARLY SAID, "THAT WAS DEFINITELY HISOKA"!!
THAT'S IT.
THAT'S WHAT HE WANTED US TO LIMIT OURSELVES TO.
?!
WAIT, WAIT... WE WERE JUST SAYING HISOKA MIGHT'VE BEEN LYNCH.
BUT THEN THAT WASN'T HISOKA?! THEN WHO ...?!
LYNCH FOUND OUT "HISOKA" WAS A FAKE THROUGH HER ABILITY! THAT WHY HE SILENCED HER.
YOU WERE LEFT ALIVE TO TELL THE REST OF US THAT YOU FOUND HISOKA, NOT REALIZING IT WASN'T ACTUALLY HIM!

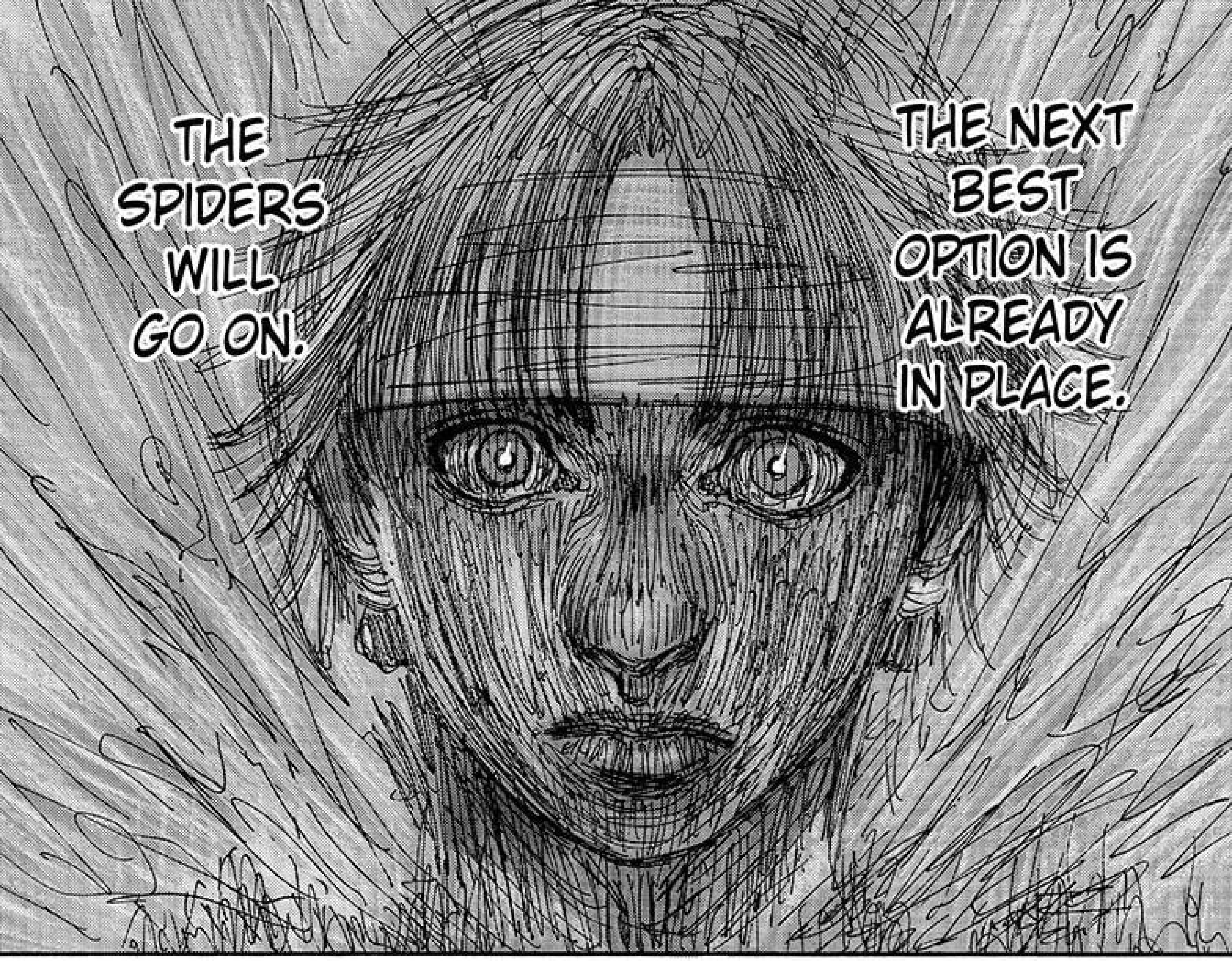

A FAKE HISOKA MANIPULATED HER TO TRICK ME?
WHO WOULD EVER DO SOMETHING SO COMPLICATED?
THAT'S WHERE IT'S OBVIOUS.
THIS GUY IS LOOKING FOR HISOKA AND DOESN'T WANT US TO INTERFERE.
IF *WE* FOUND HISOKA FIRST, THE FAKE HISOKA FIGURED WE WOULD *HIDE* THAT FACT AND GIVE PERMISSION TO THEIR SIDE TO SEARCH FOR HISOKA IN VAIN.
AND THAT IS, IN FACT, WHAT HAPPENED...
BUT THIS DEDUCTION IS BASED ON AN ASSUMPTION.
THE *FACTS* ARE THAT YOU TWO FOUND HISOKA, AND THEN *SOMEONE* KILLED LYNCH...
IF IT WAS THE PHANTOM TROUPE... WE'LL HAVE TO GO TO WAR WITH CHA-R TOO.
IT'S NOT A FIGHT WE SHOULD START BASED ON SPECULATIONS, BUT...
WE'LL AVENGE HER DEATH, RIGHT?
NO MATTER WHO IT WAS.
OF COURSE.

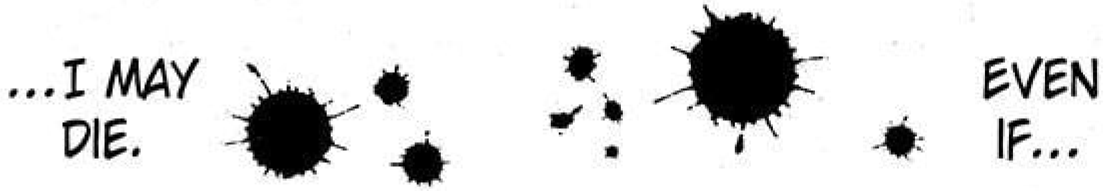

THE FUNERAL PROCESSION WILL BE PASSING THROUGH SHORTLY. WE ARE EXPECTING A MASSIVE CROWD.
PLEASE REMEMBER, THIS IS A RESPECTFUL EVENT. DO NOT RUN, OR PUSH OTHERS. PLEASE OBSERVE IN SILENCE. MAY NINTH PRINCE HALKENBURG REST IN PEACE!
UMM
ズズ
RRRNG
RRRNG

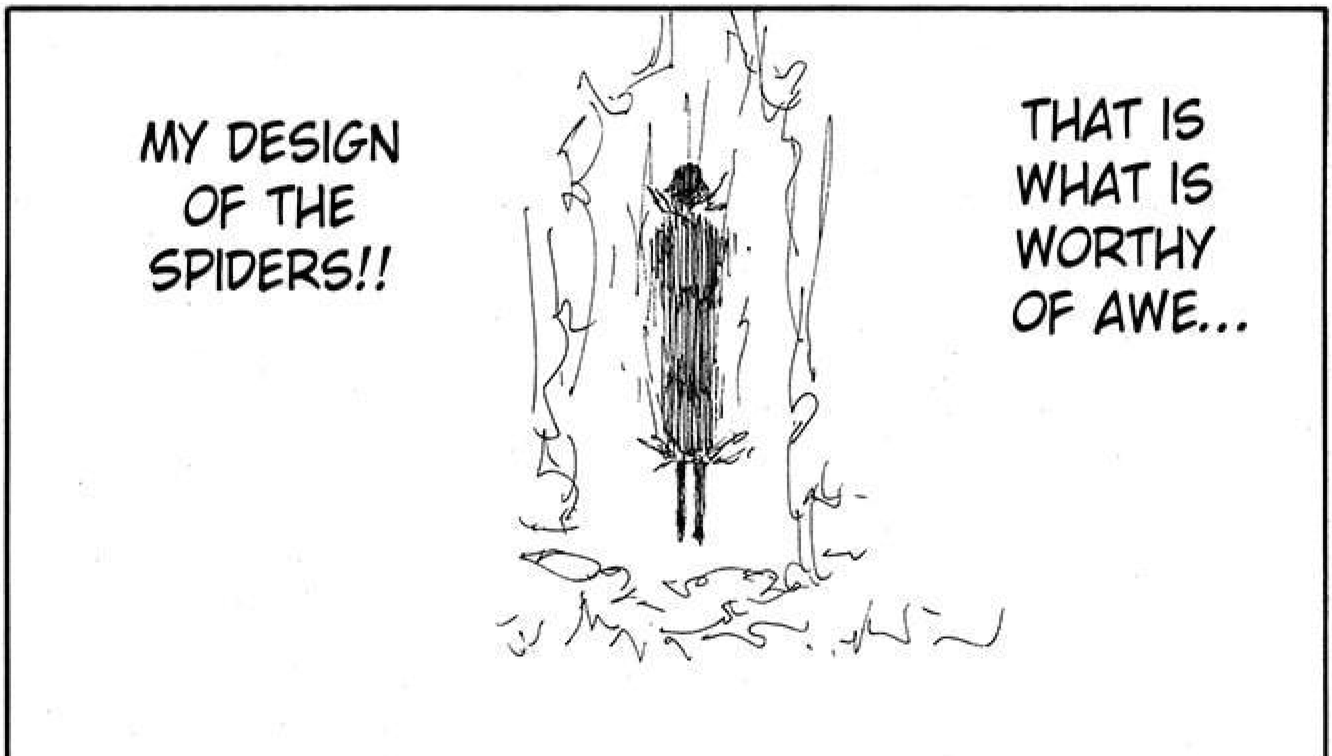

THE PERSON WHOSE NUMBER YOU HAVE CALLED IS NOT IN THIS AREA.
PLEASE TRY AGAIN LATER, OR IN A DIFFERENT LOCATION. THE NUMBER OF CALLS YOU HAVE LEFT TODAY IS...
NOT EVEN IN THIS CROWD.
COME TO THINK OF IT, IT WAS THE SAME AT THE HEAVENS ARENA.
DO I TRY SOMEWHERE ELSE WITH THIS NUMBER, OR DO I LOOSEN THE RESTRICTIONS A BIT?
SHOULD I GO TO TIER 1, WHERE THEY'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SUCCESSION BATTLE... EVEN IF IT'S RISKIER?
THERE SHOULD BE FAR MORE PEOPLE WITH ABILITIES HIDING!
THE SUCCESSION BATTLE RITUAL BESTOWS NEN ABILITIES.
THEY USE THOSE ABILITIES AND FIGHT UNTIL THERE'S A SOLE SURVIVOR.
USED IN THIS SUCCESSION BATTLE IS KAKIN'S REGALIA...
THE THREE SACRED TREASURES I SEEK!!

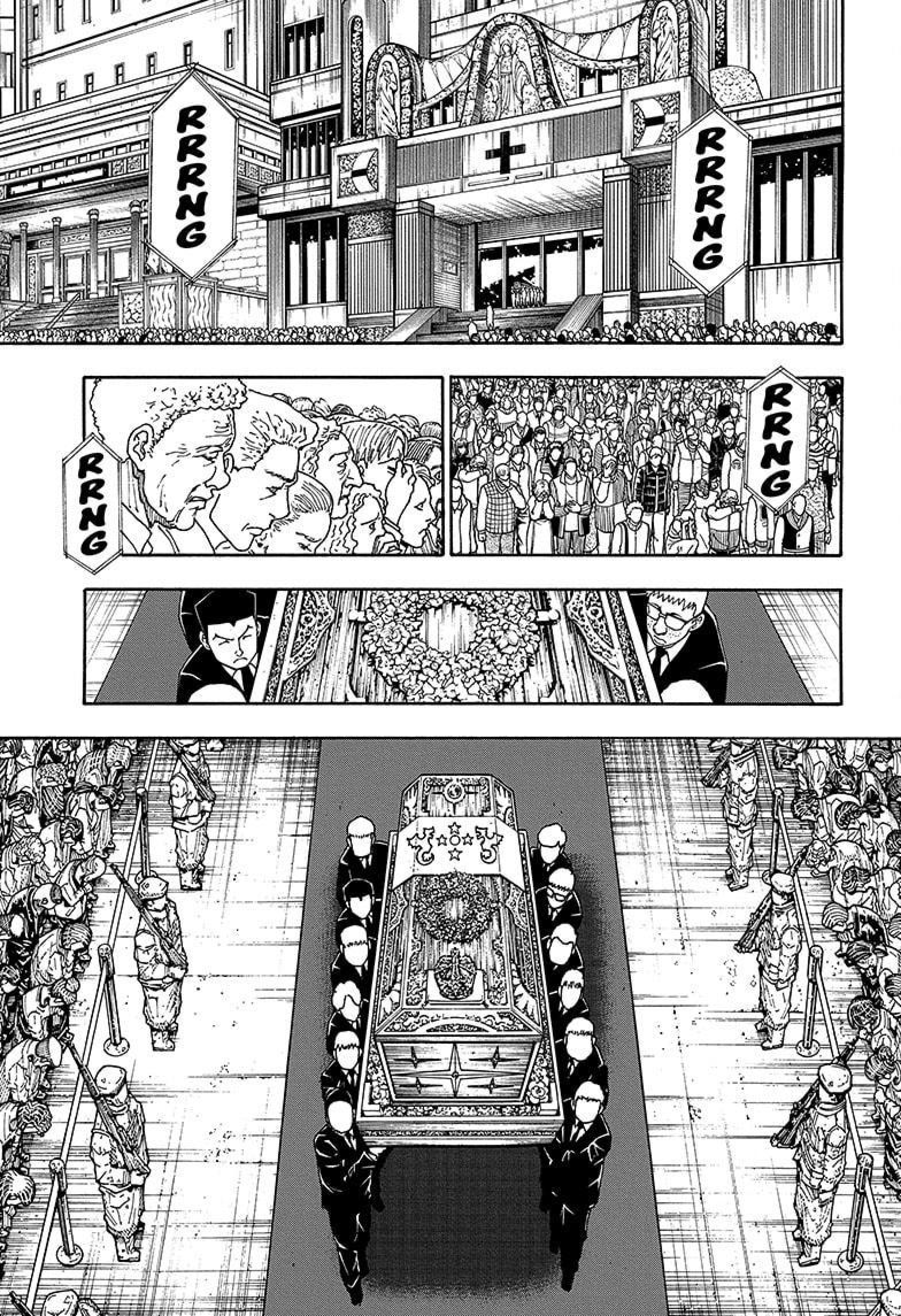

THE RITUAL VASE USED FOR THE SUCCESSION BATTLE PARTICIPANTS
THE SEED URN
THE DIVINE MUMMY, OVERSEER OF THE SUCCESSION BATTLE
THE LOTUS ANCHORITE
THE SWORD OF ACCESSION GIVEN TO THE NEXT KING
THE SWORD OF GOOD OMENS

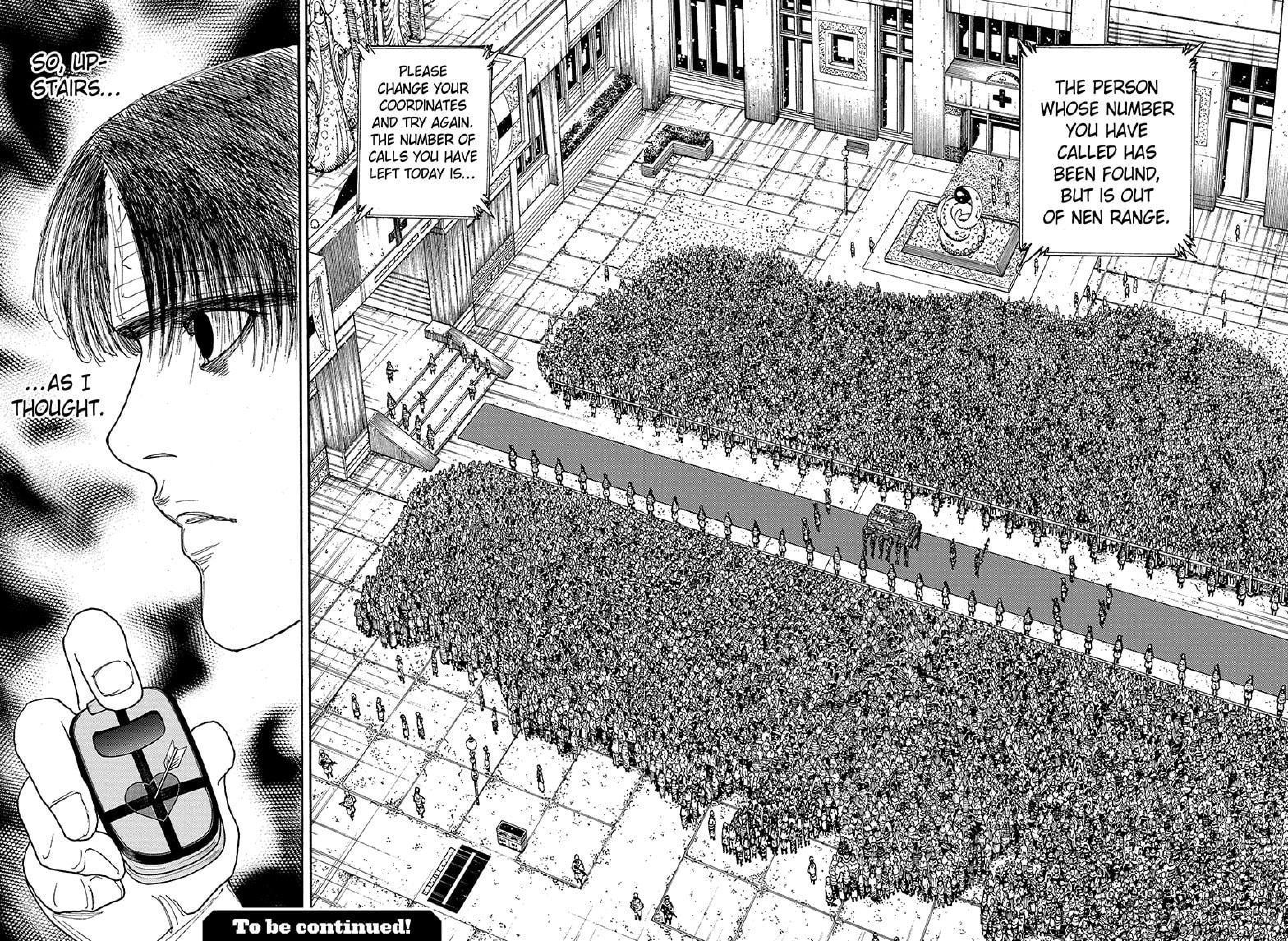

THE ROYAL FAMILY MUST'VE FOUND OUT BY NOW, THROUGH THE MAFIA, THAT WE'RE ON BOARD.
THEY WOULD NEVER BELIEVE WE'RE HERE JUST TO LOOK FOR HISOKA. AND IN FACT, WE *ARE* AFTER THEIR TREASURE TOO.
WHETHER THEY KEEP ALL THREE TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE OR DISPERSE THE RISK IS UP TO KAKIN... THEREFORE...
...WE THOROUGHLY SEARCHED FOR HISOKA *AND* THE THREE TREASURES AT THE SAME TIME, FROM THE BOTTOM UP.
SINCE NEITHER THE MAFIA NOR THE MILITARY CHANGED THEIR MOVES MUCH, EVEN AFTER THEY HEARD ABOUT US UPSTAIRS, IT'S SIGNIFICANTLY *LESS* LIKELY THEY'RE IN TIERS 3-5.
WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT NEN ABILITIES WERE USED IN THE SUCCESSION BATTLE AND THAT THE THREE TREASURES WERE INVOLVED, I KNEW...
THE THREE TREASURES ARE THE SYSTEM USED TO CREATE THE POWERFUL NEN NEEDED, NOT ONLY FOR THE SUCCESSION BATTLE, BUT TO MAINTAIN THE PROSPERITY OF KAKIN ITSELF!!
THERE MUST BE A FOCAL POINT, A FUNERAL HALL, WHERE THE TREASURES ARE ENSHRINED... WHICH MEANS IT HAS TO BE IN TIER 1.
HOLY TREASURES LITERALLY FORMING THE ROOT OF KAKIN'S PROSPERITY WOULD BE GUARDED MORE STRICTLY THAN THE KING HIMSELF! THE GREATEST PRIZE TO STEAL— THEY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SATISFY THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED TO UPGRADE *SKILL HUNTER*!!
THAT'S THE POWER I NEED TO KILL HISOKA FOR GOOD THIS TIME... IN ORDER TO STEAL SUCH A RARE AND POWERFUL ABILITY AND PUT IT IN THE BOOK, I HAVE TO ACHIEVE "STEALING A NATIONAL TREASURE-LEVEL ITEM" *BEFORE* THE USUAL ACTIVATION CONDITIONS.
IT'S GETTING HARDER TO KEEP CONTROL OVER TWO CONFLICTING EMOTIONS.
I MUSTN'T BE IMPATIENT... BUT I CAN'T WAIT FOREVER.
MAKING THE ATTEMPT CARRIES A GREATER RISK— GOING TO TIER 1 INCREASES THE CHANCES THAT I'D RUN INTO HISOKA BEFORE I'M COMPLETELY READY TO FIGHT. BUT THAT'S NOT A BIG PROBLEM RIGHT NOW.


THE NEXT BEST OPTION IS ALREADY IN PLACE.
THE SPIDERS WILL GO ON.


EVEN IF...
...I MAY DIE.


THAT IS WHAT IS WORTHY OF AWE...
MY DESIGN OF THE SPIDERS!!


RRRNG
RRRNG
RRNG
RRNG


THE PERSON WHOSE NUMBER YOU HAVE CALLED HAS BEEN FOUND, BUT IS OUT OF NEN RANGE.
PLEASE CHANGE YOUR COORDINATES AND TRY AGAIN. THE NUMBER OF CALLS YOU HAVE LEFT TODAY IS...
SO, UPSTAIRS...
...AS I THOUGHT.
To be continued!

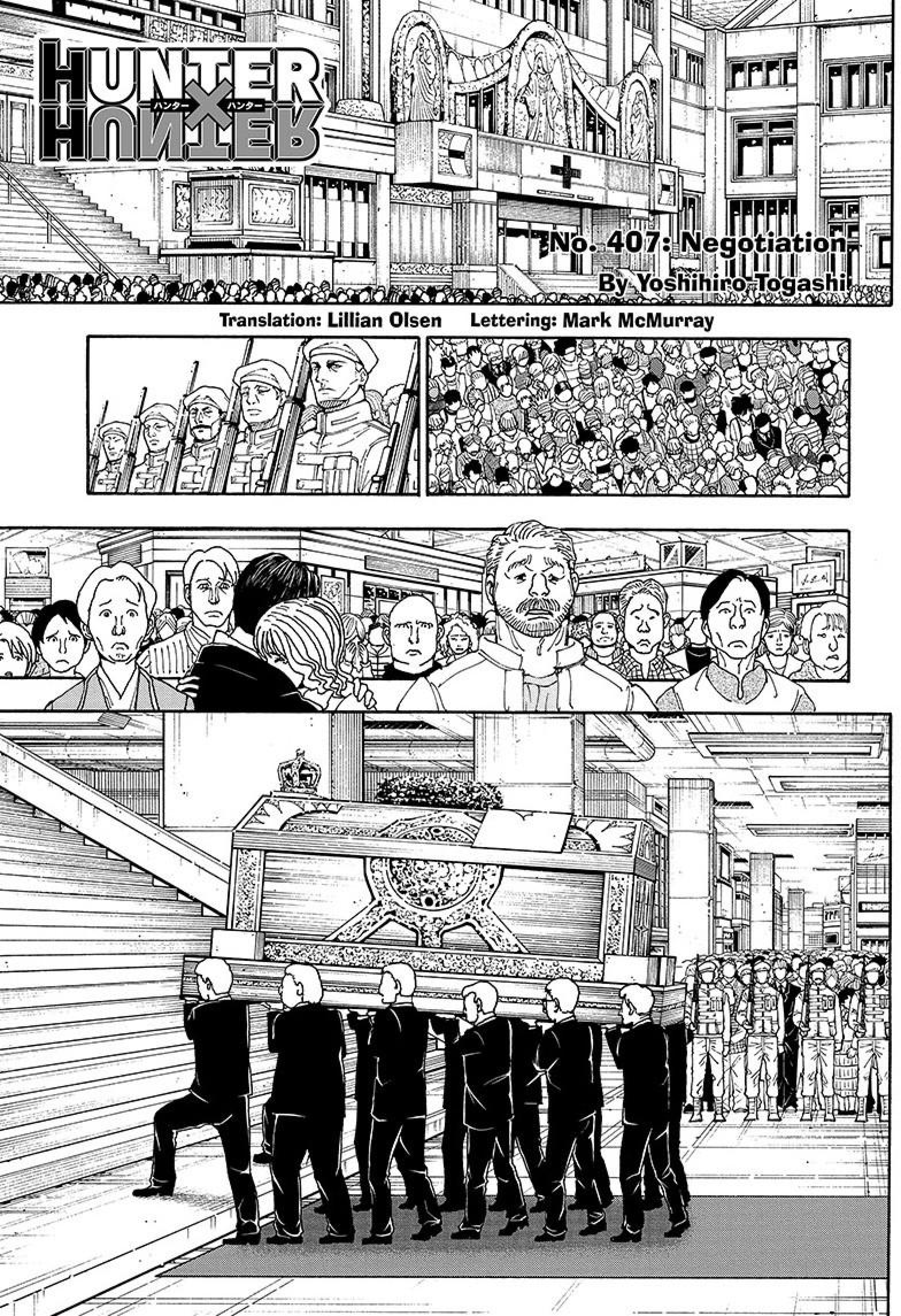
HUNTER×HUNTER

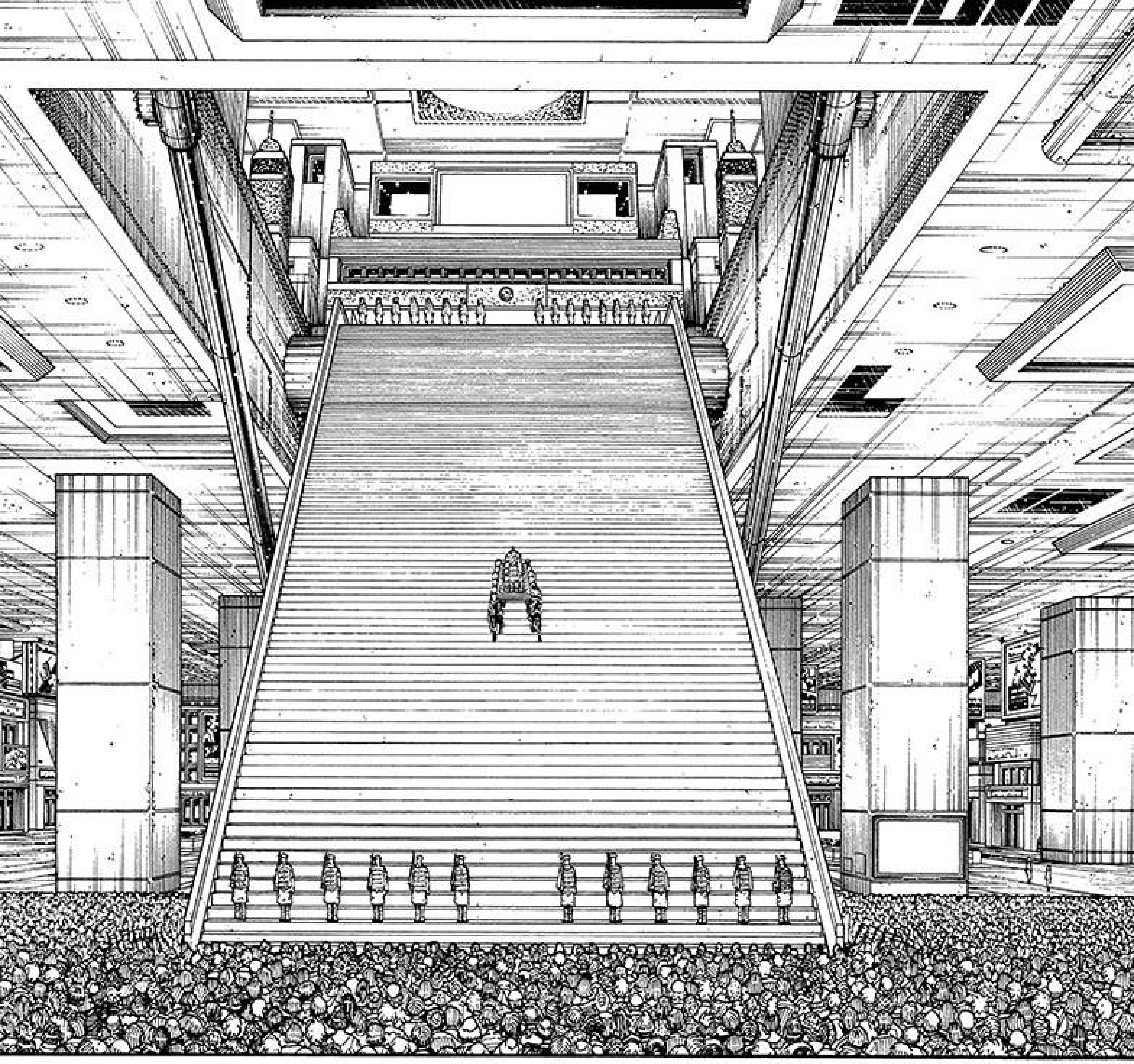
ハンター×ハンター

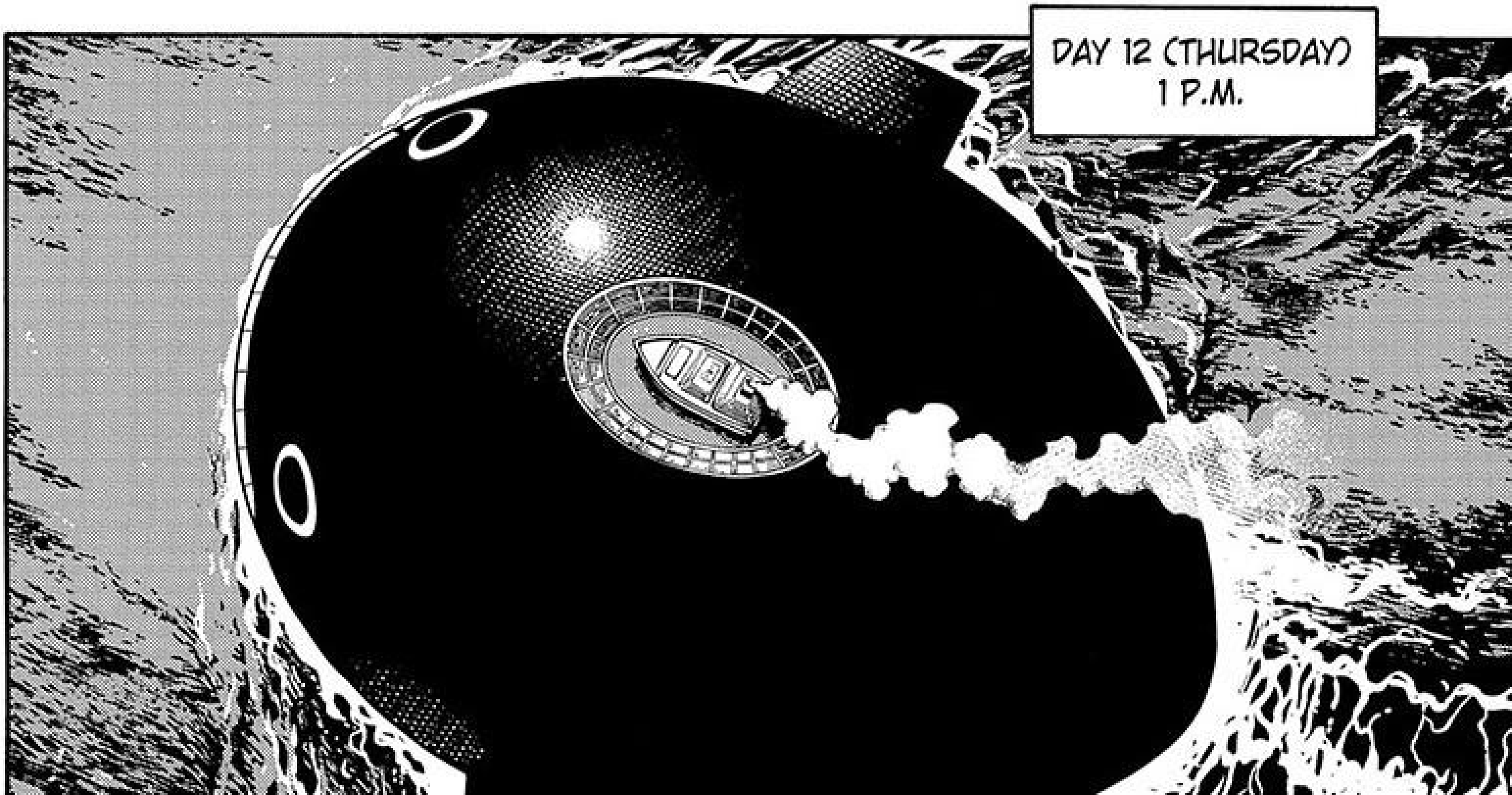
No. 407: Negotiation

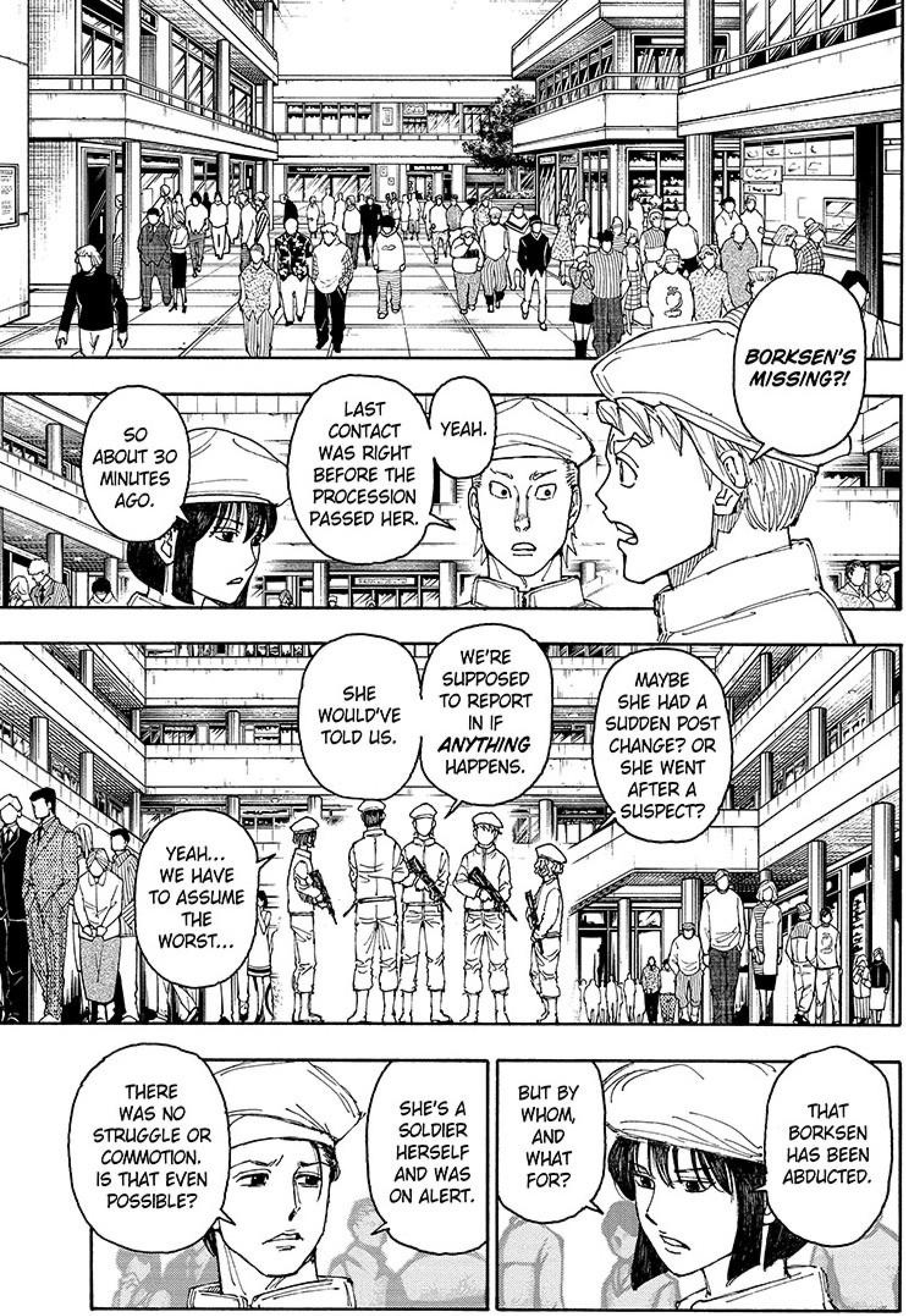
By Yoshihiro Togashi

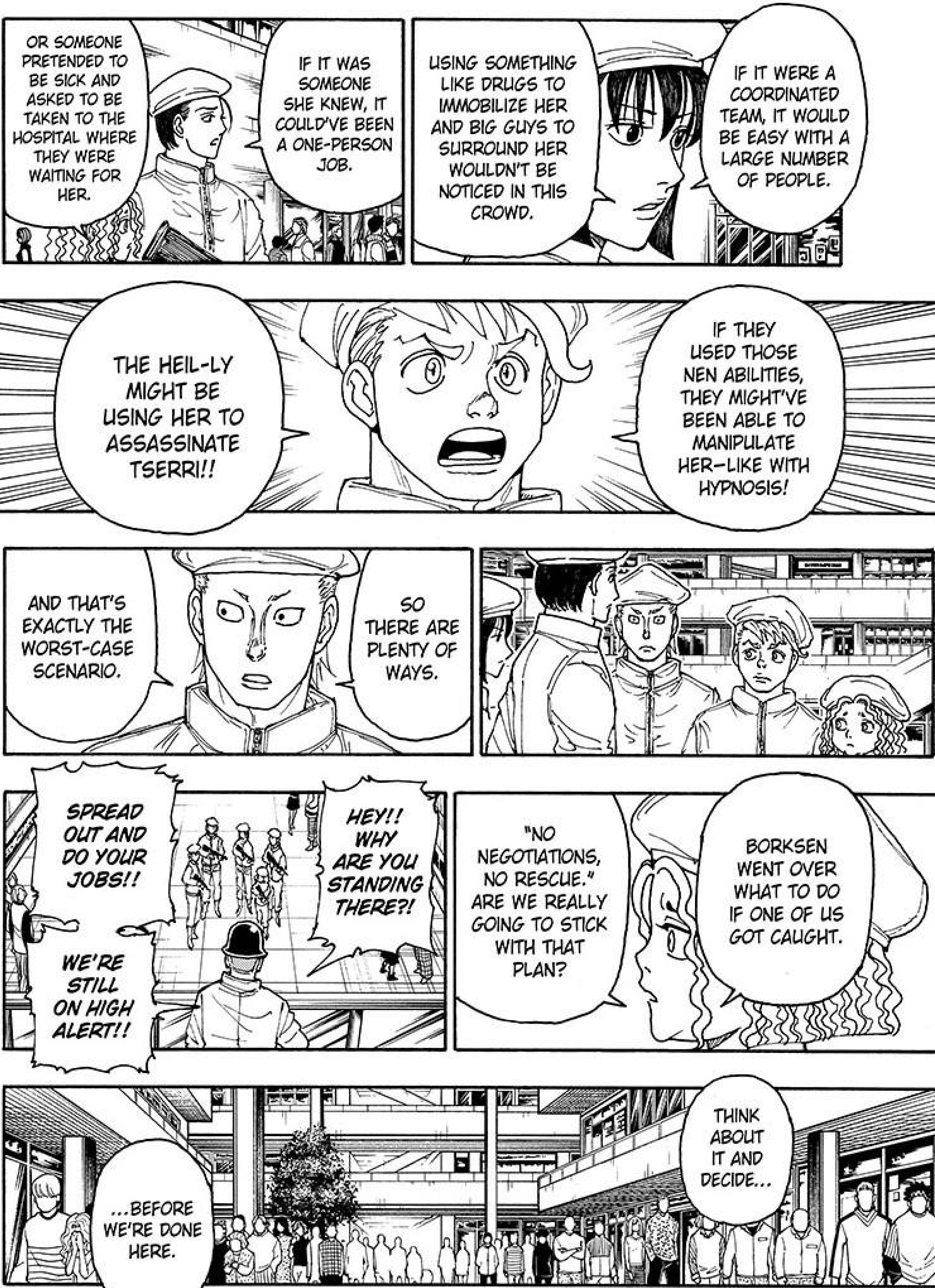
Translation: Lillian Olsen Lettering: Mark McMurray

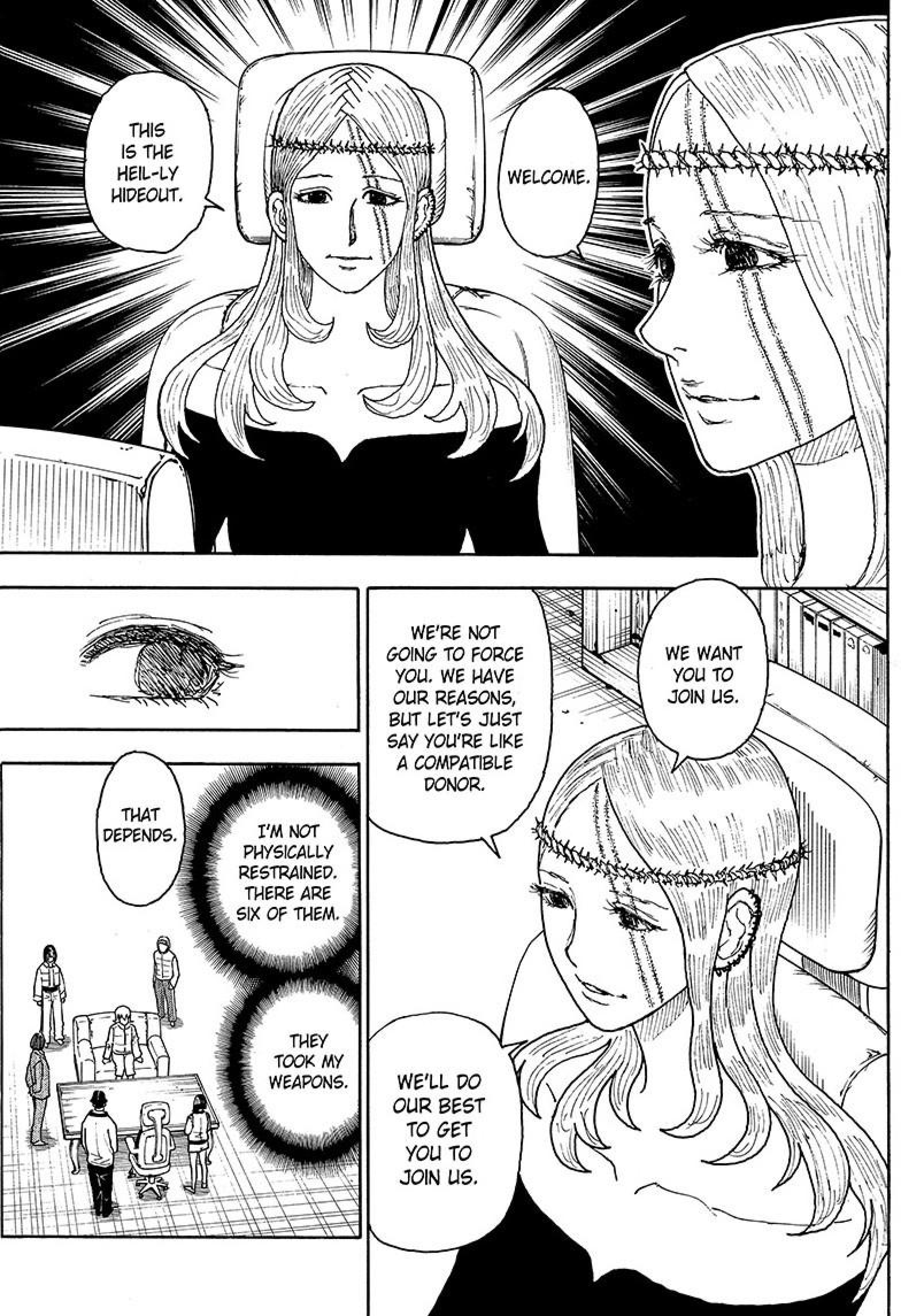


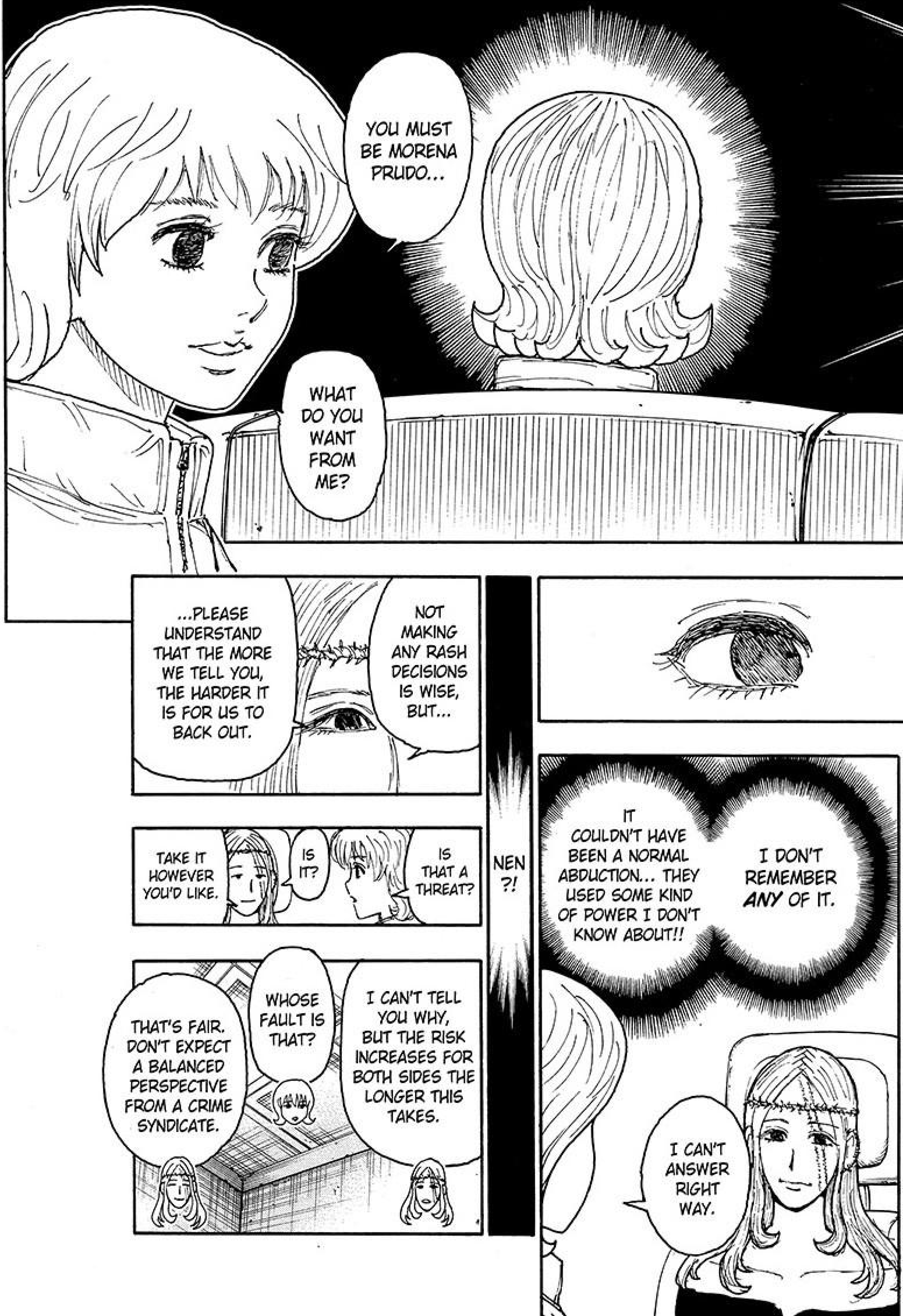


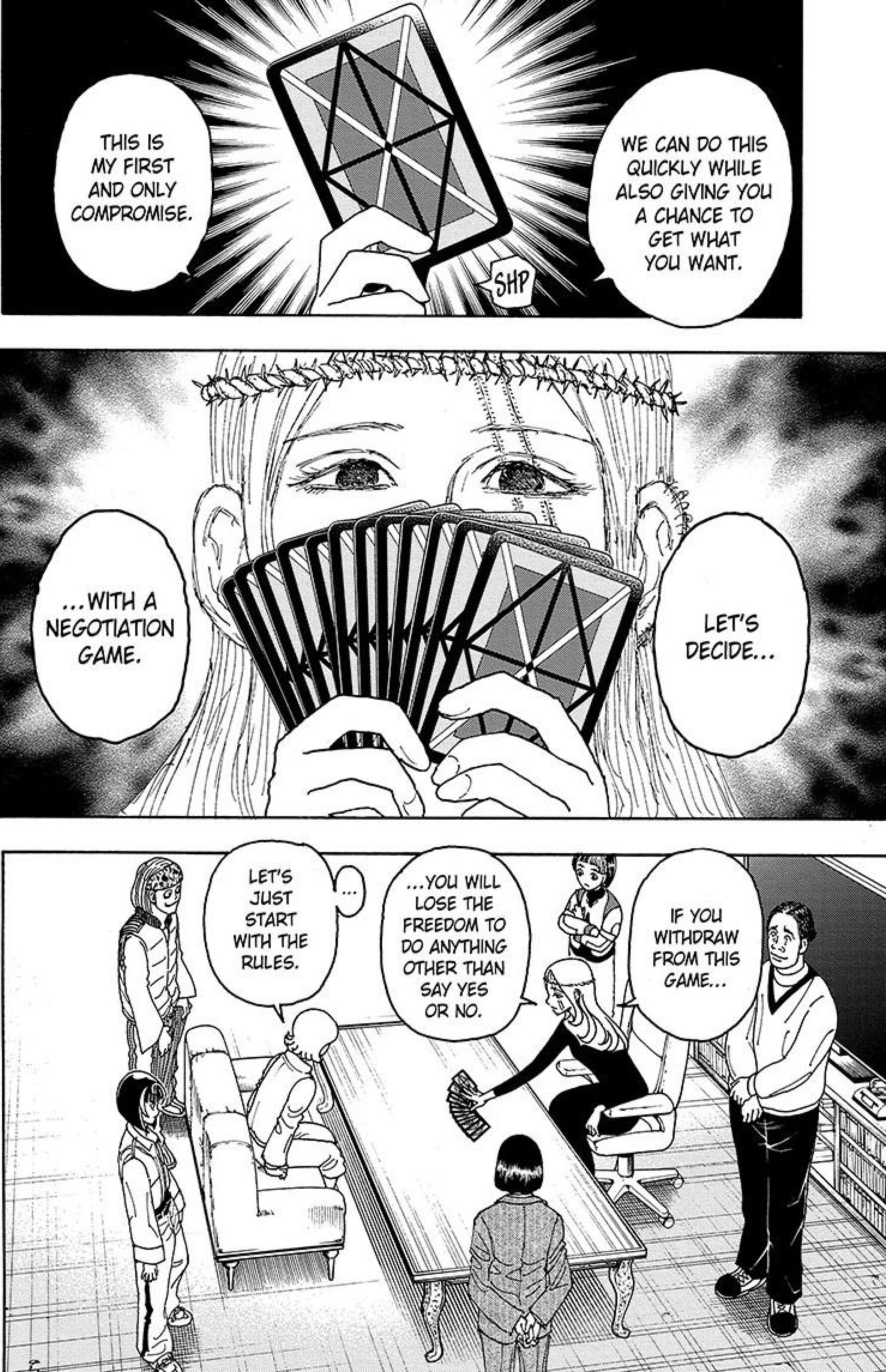

DAY 12 (THURSDAY)
1 P.M.

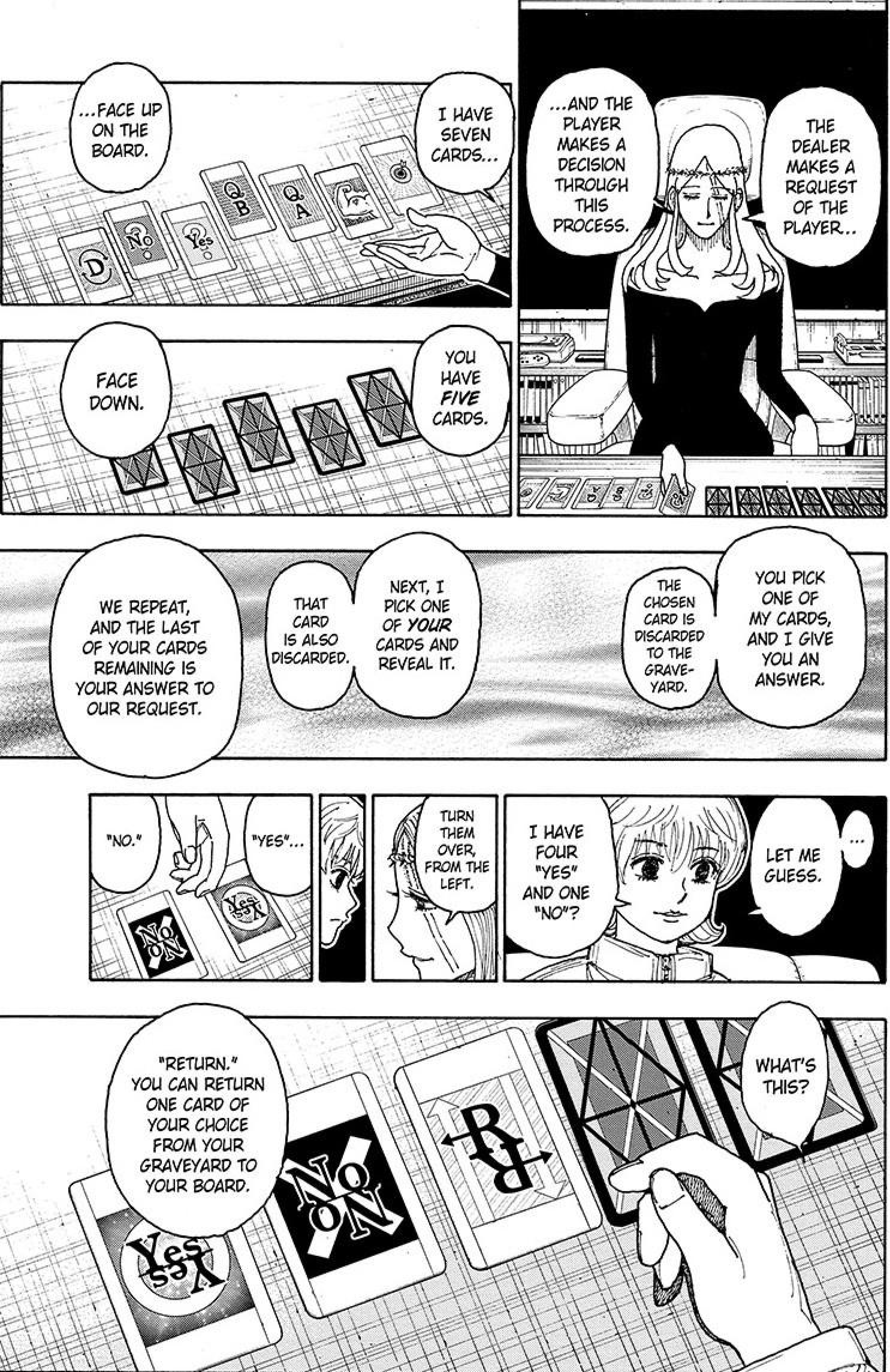

BORKSEN'S MISSING?!
YEAH.
LAST CONTACT WAS RIGHT BEFORE THE PROCESSION PASSED HER.
SO ABOUT 30 MINUTES AGO.
MAYBE SHE HAD A SUDDEN POST CHANGE? OR SHE WENT AFTER A SUSPECT?
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO REPORT IN IF *ANYTHING* HAPPENS.
SHE WOULD'VE TOLD US.
YEAH... WE HAVE TO ASSUME THE WORST...
THAT BORKSEN HAS BEEN ABDUCTED.
BUT BY WHOM, AND WHAT FOR?
SHE'S A SOLDIER HERSELF AND WAS ON ALERT.
THERE WAS NO STRUGGLE OR COMMOTION. IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

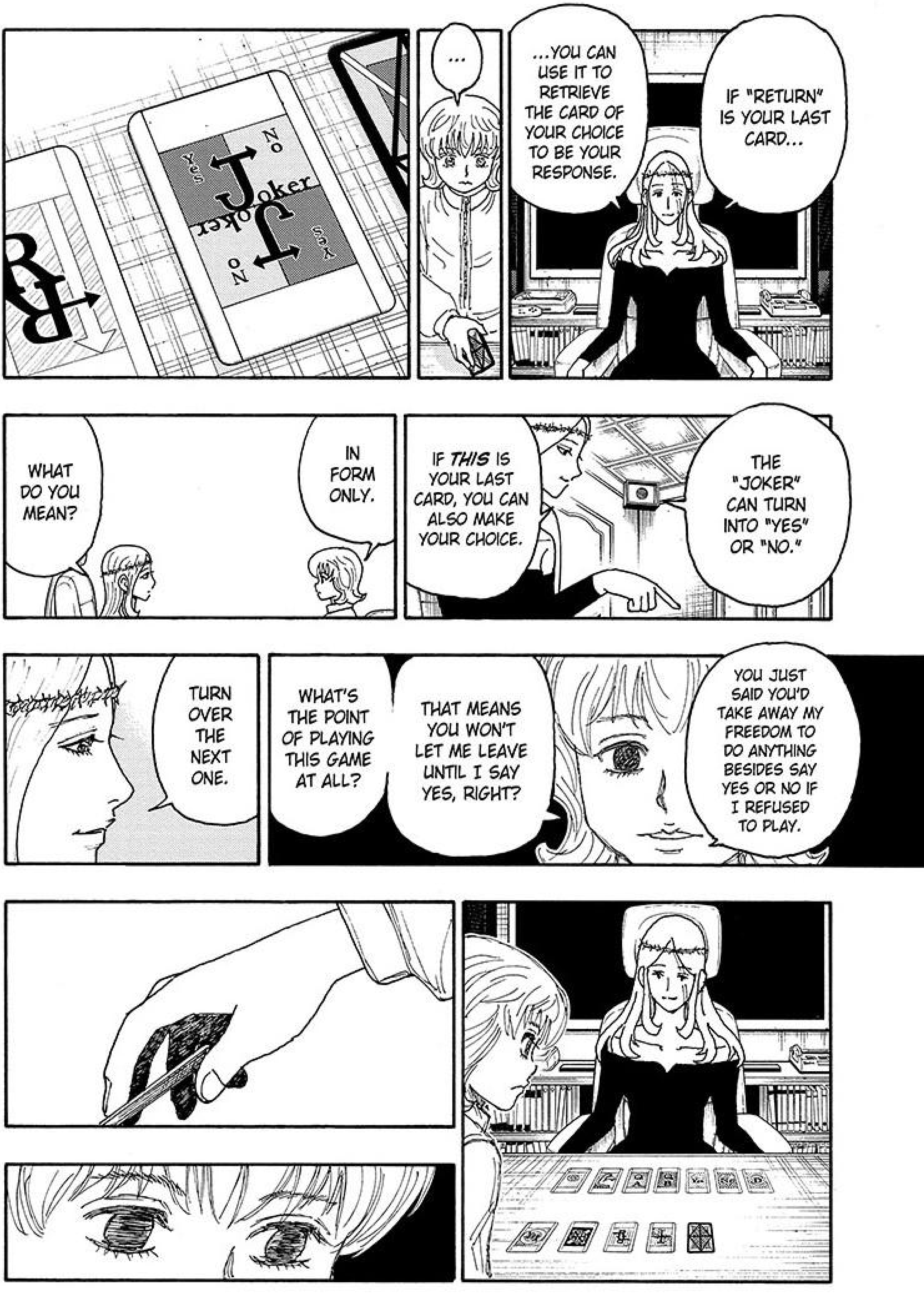

IF IT WERE A COORDINATED TEAM, IT WOULD BE EASY WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE.
USING SOMETHING LIKE DRUGS TO IMMOBILIZE HER AND BIG GUYS TO SURROUND HER WOULDN'T BE NOTICED IN THIS CROWD.
IF IT WAS SOMEONE SHE KNEW, IT COULD'VE BEEN A ONE-PERSON JOB.
OR SOMEONE PRETENDED TO BE SICK AND ASKED TO BE TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL WHERE THEY WERE WAITING FOR HER.
IF THEY USED THOSE NEN ABILITIES, THEY MIGHT'VE BEEN ABLE TO MANIPULATE HER—LIKE WITH HYPNOSIS!
THE HEIL-LY MIGHT BE USING HER TO ASSASSINATE TSERRI!!
SO THERE ARE PLENTY OF WAYS.
AND THAT'S EXACTLY THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO.
BORKSEN WENT OVER WHAT TO DO IF ONE OF US GOT CAUGHT.
"NO NEGOTIATIONS, NO RESCUE." ARE WE REALLY GOING TO STICK WITH THAT PLAN?
HEY!! WHY ARE YOU STANDING THERE?!
SPREAD OUT AND DO YOUR JOBS!!
WE'RE STILL ON HIGH ALERT!!
THINK ABOUT IT AND DECIDE...
...BEFORE WE'RE DONE HERE.

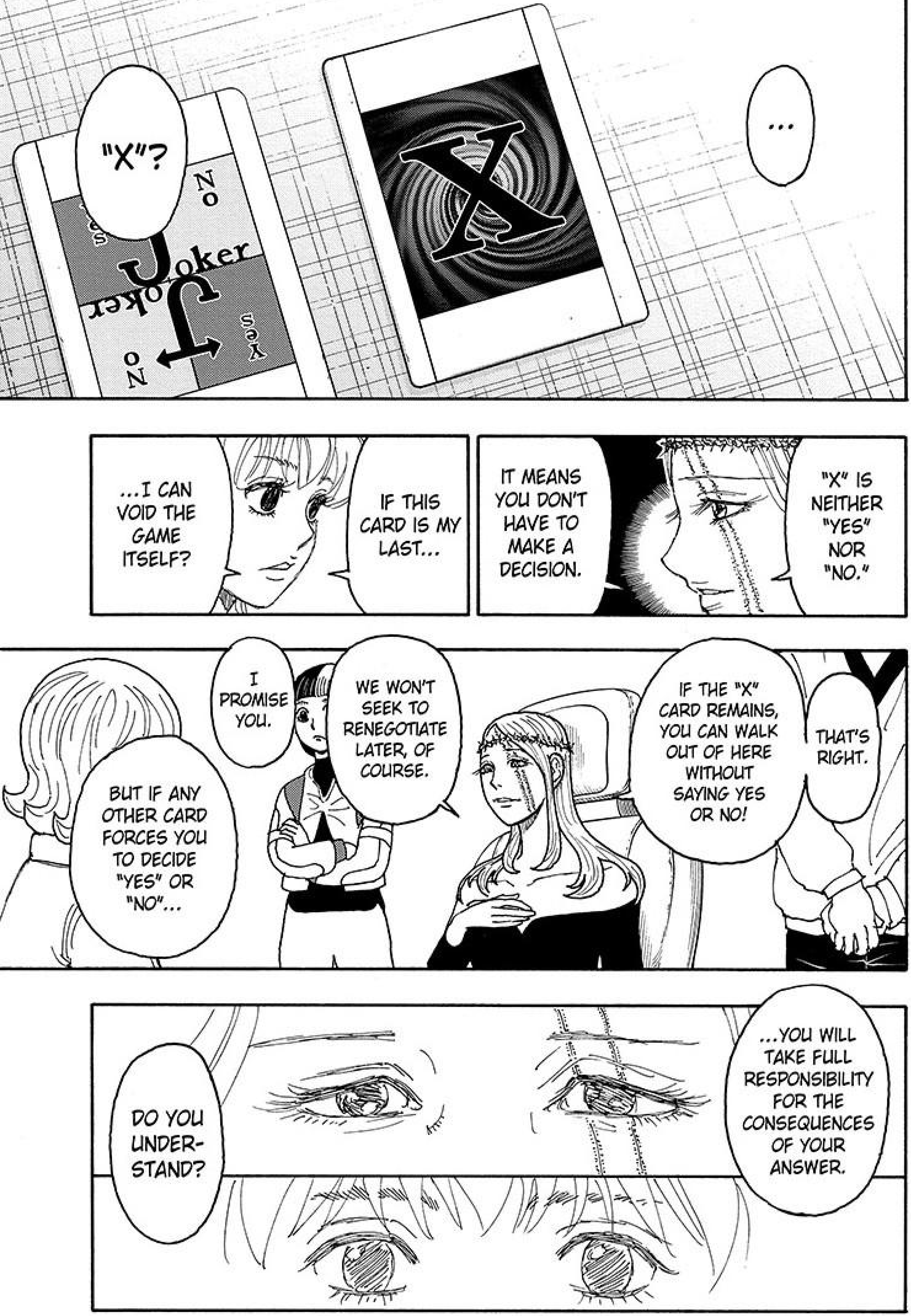

WELCOME.
THIS IS THE HEIL-LY HIDEOUT.
WE WANT YOU TO JOIN US.
WE'RE NOT GOING TO FORCE YOU. WE HAVE OUR REASONS, BUT LET'S JUST SAY YOU'RE LIKE A COMPATIBLE DONOR.
WE'LL DO OUR BEST TO GET YOU TO JOIN US.
THAT DEPENDS.
I'M NOT PHYSICALLY RESTRAINED. THERE ARE SIX OF THEM.
THEY TOOK MY WEAPONS.

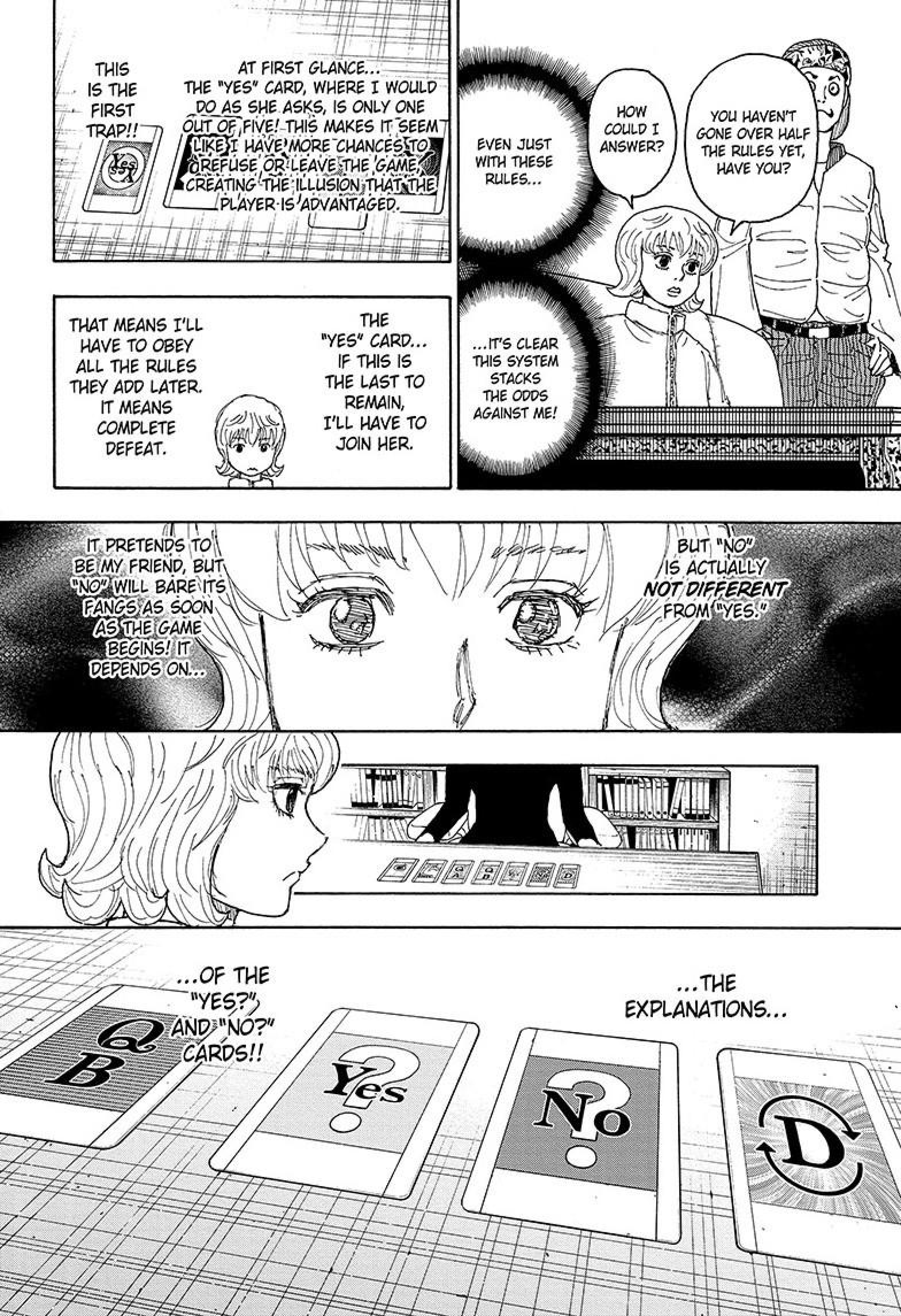

YOU MUST BE MORENA PRUDO...
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
I DON'T REMEMBER *ANY* OF IT.
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A NORMAL ABDUCTION... THEY USED SOME KIND OF POWER I DON'T KNOW ABOUT!!
I CAN'T ANSWER RIGHT WAY.
NEN ?!
NOT MAKING ANY RASH DECISIONS IS WISE, BUT...
...PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT THE MORE WE TELL YOU, THE HARDER IT IS FOR US TO BACK OUT.
IS THAT A THREAT?
IS IT?
TAKE IT HOWEVER YOU'D LIKE.
I CAN'T TELL YOU WHY, BUT THE RISK INCREASES FOR BOTH SIDES THE LONGER THIS TAKES.
WHOSE FAULT IS THAT?
THAT'S FAIR. DON'T EXPECT A BALANCED PERSPECTIVE FROM A CRIME SYNDICATE.

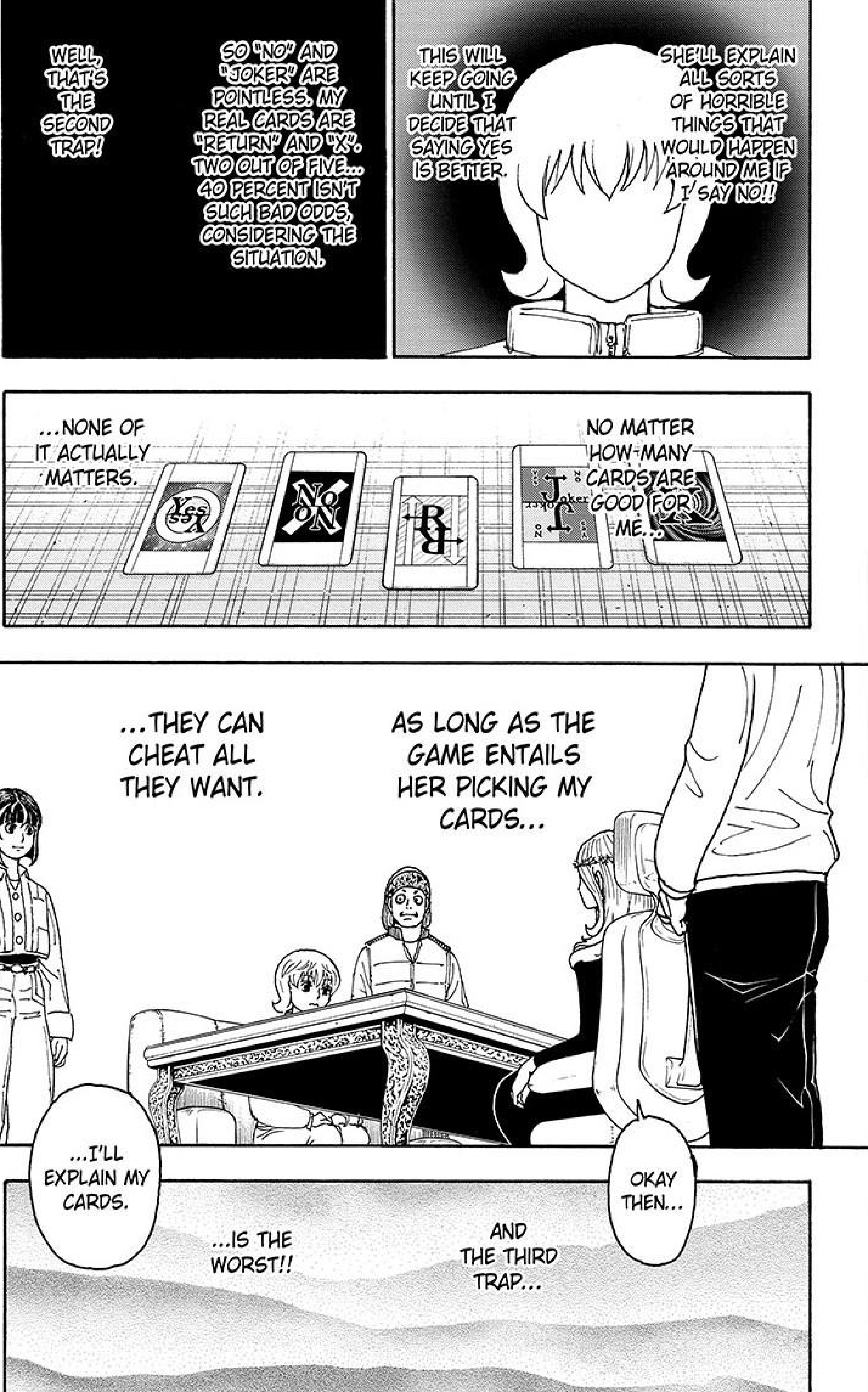

WE CAN DO THIS QUICKLY WHILE ALSO GIVING YOU A CHANCE TO GET WHAT YOU WANT.
SHP
THIS IS MY FIRST AND ONLY COMPROMISE.
LET'S DECIDE...
...WITH A NEGOTIATION GAME.
IF YOU WITHDRAW FROM THIS GAME...
...YOU WILL LOSE THE FREEDOM TO DO ANYTHING OTHER THAN SAY YES OR NO.
...
LET'S JUST START WITH THE RULES.

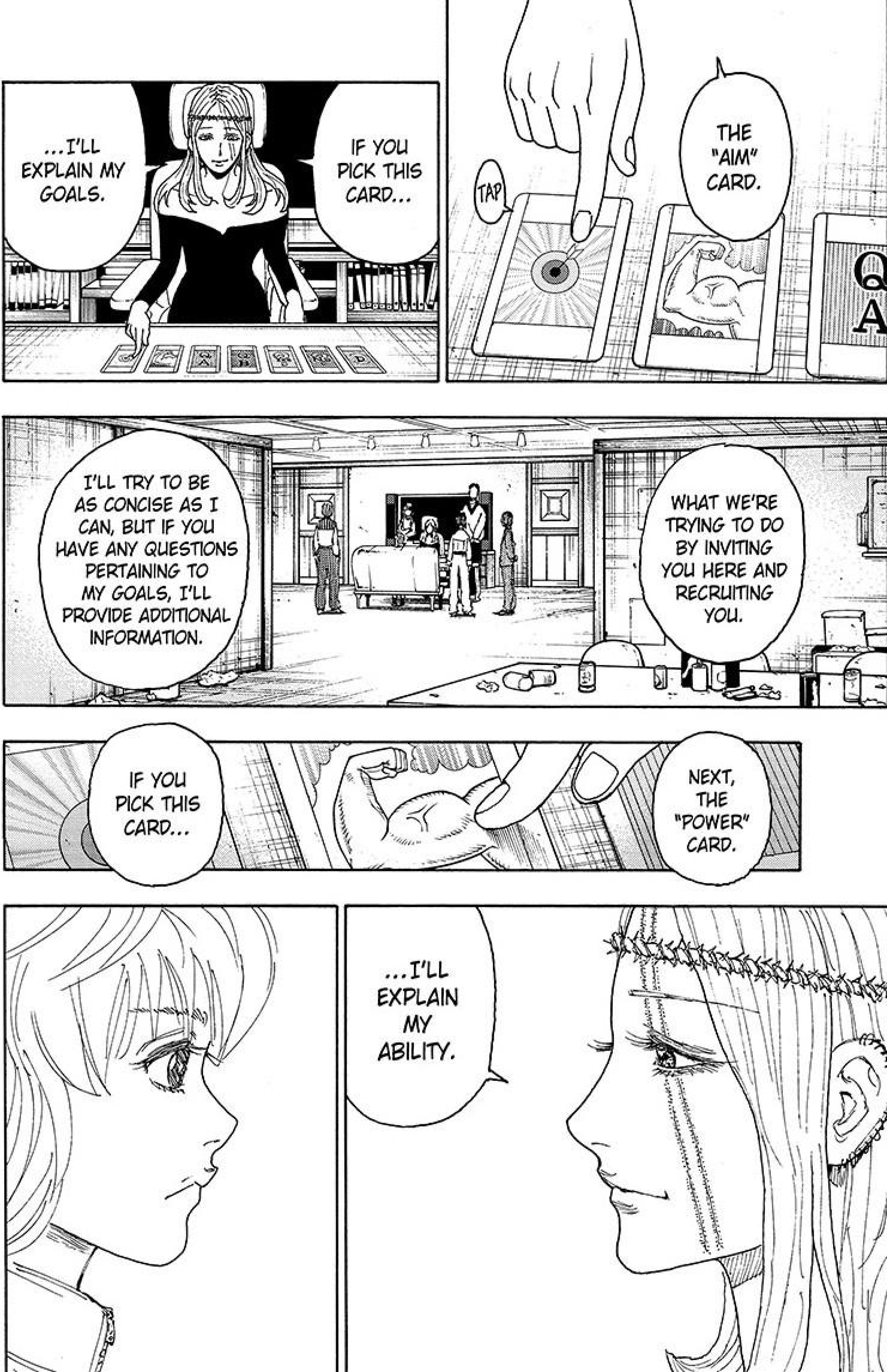

THE DEALER MAKES A REQUEST OF THE PLAYER...
...AND THE PLAYER MAKES A DECISION THROUGH THIS PROCESS.
I HAVE SEVEN CARDS...
...FACE UP ON THE BOARD.
YOU HAVE *FIVE* CARDS.
FACE DOWN.
YOU PICK ONE OF MY CARDS, AND I GIVE YOU AN ANSWER.
THE CHOSEN CARD IS DISCARDED TO THE GRAVEYARD.
NEXT, I PICK ONE OF ***YOUR*** CARDS AND REVEAL IT.
THAT CARD IS ALSO DISCARDED.
WE REPEAT, AND THE LAST OF YOUR CARDS REMAINING IS YOUR ANSWER TO OUR REQUEST.
...
LET ME GUESS.
I HAVE FOUR "YES" AND ONE "NO"?
TURN THEM OVER, FROM THE LEFT.
"YES"...
"NO."
WHAT'S THIS?
"RETURN." YOU CAN RETURN ONE CARD OF YOUR CHOICE FROM YOUR GRAVEYARD TO YOUR BOARD.

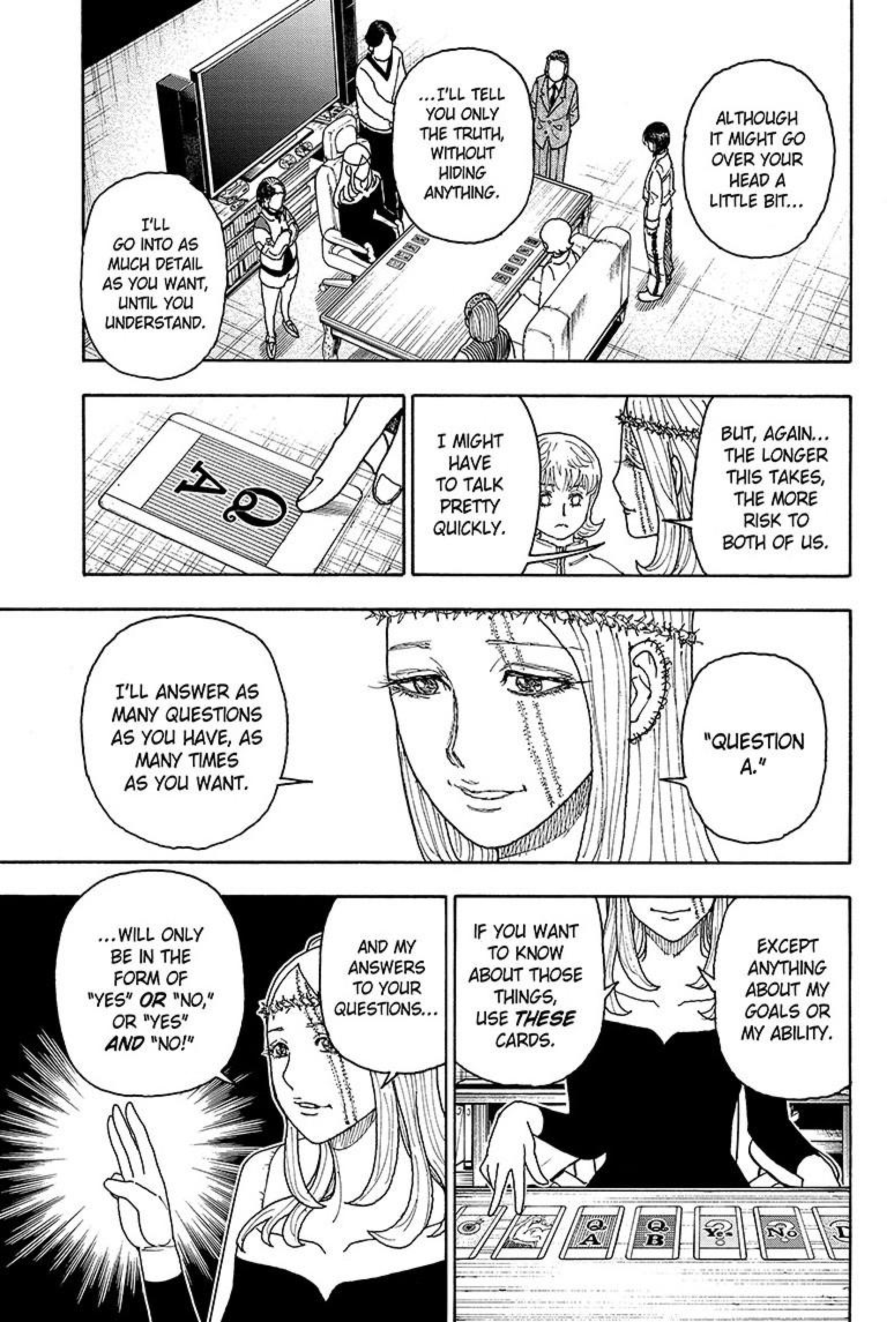

IF "RETURN" IS YOUR LAST CARD...
...YOU CAN USE IT TO RETRIEVE THE CARD OF YOUR CHOICE TO BE YOUR RESPONSE.
...
Joker
Yes
No
Joker
Yes
No
R
THE "JOKER" CAN TURN INTO "YES" OR "NO."
IF THIS IS YOUR LAST CARD, YOU CAN ALSO MAKE YOUR CHOICE.
IN FORM ONLY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU JUST SAID YOU'D TAKE AWAY MY FREEDOM TO DO ANYTHING BESIDES SAY YES OR NO IF I REFUSED TO PLAY.
THAT MEANS YOU WON'T LET ME LEAVE UNTIL I SAY YES, RIGHT?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF PLAYING THIS GAME AT ALL?
TURN OVER THE NEXT ONE.

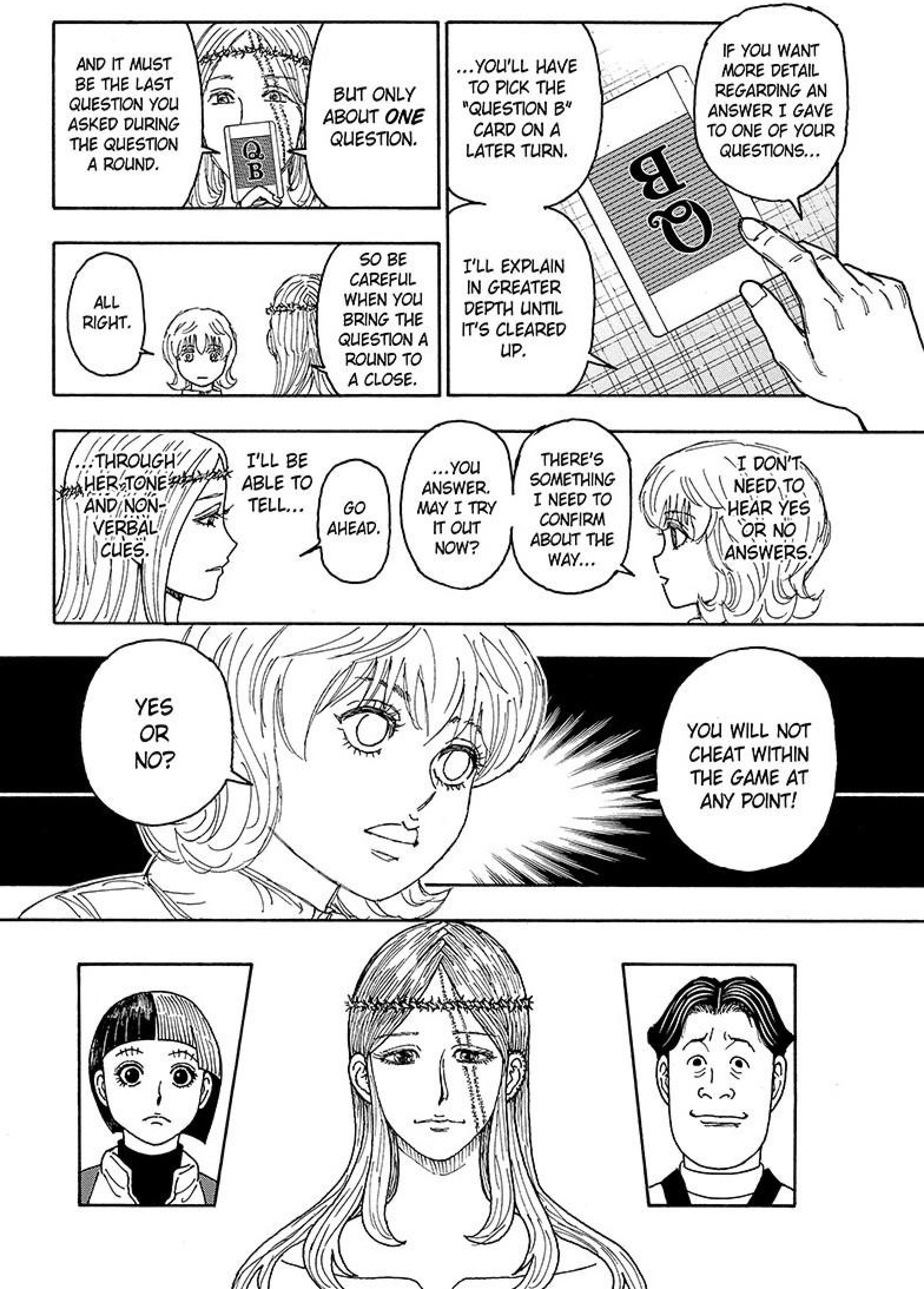

…
"X"?
Joker
Yes
No
X
"X" IS NEITHER "YES" NOR "NO."
IT MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION.
IF THIS CARD IS MY LAST…
…I CAN VOID THE GAME ITSELF?
THAT'S RIGHT.
IF THE "X" CARD REMAINS, YOU CAN WALK OUT OF HERE WITHOUT SAYING YES OR NO!
WE WON'T SEEK TO RENEGOTIATE LATER, OF COURSE.
I PROMISE YOU.
BUT IF ANY OTHER CARD FORCES YOU TO DECIDE "YES" OR "NO"…
…YOU WILL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ANSWER.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

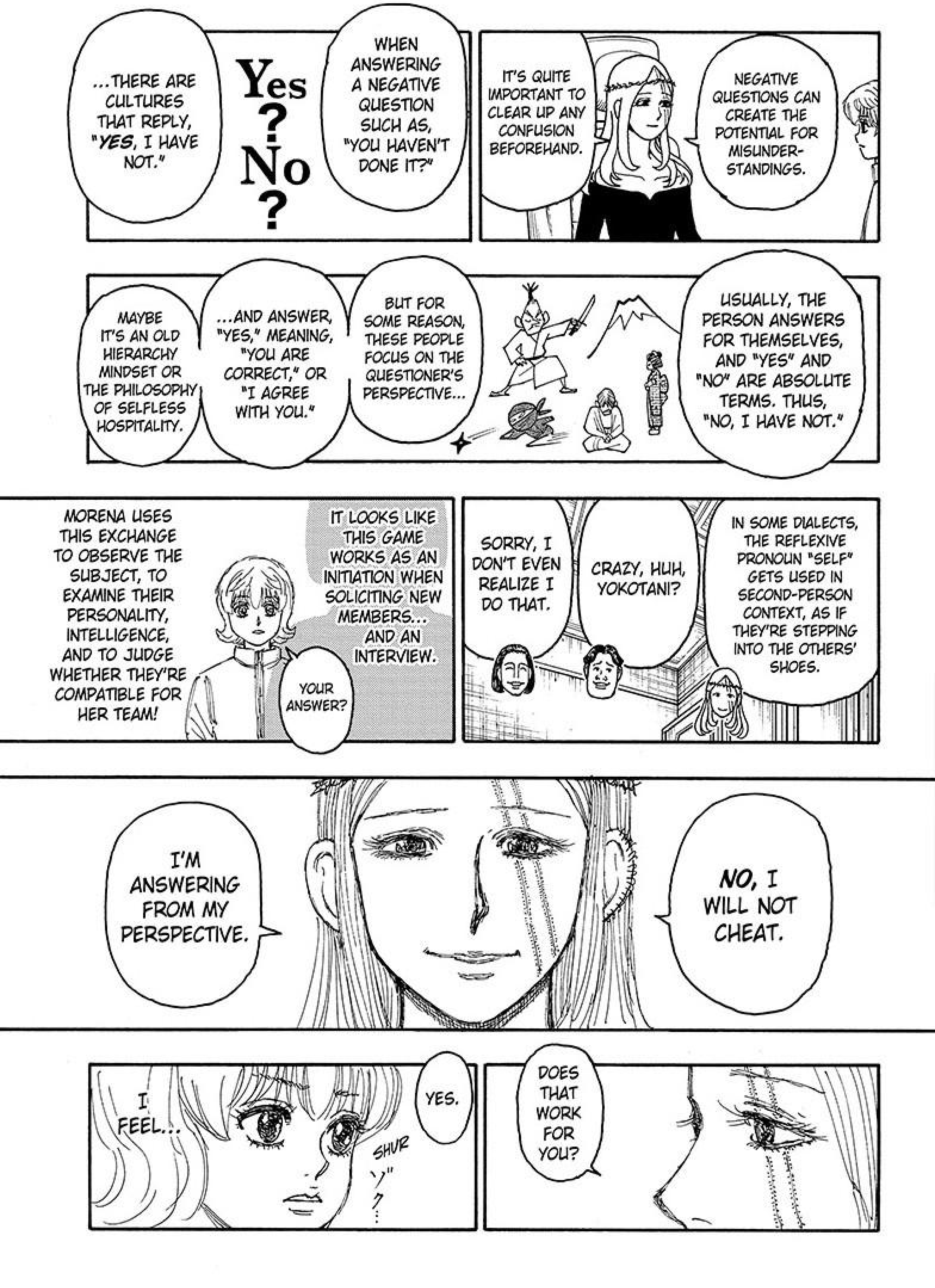

YOU HAVEN'T GONE OVER HALF THE RULES YET, HAVE YOU?
HOW COULD I ANSWER?
EVEN JUST WITH THESE RULES...
...IT'S CLEAR THIS SYSTEM STACKS THE ODDS AGAINST ME!
AT FIRST GLANCE... THE "YES" CARD, WHERE I WOULD DO AS SHE ASKS, IS ONLY ONE OUT OF FIVE! THIS MAKES IT SEEM LIKE I HAVE MORE CHANCES TO REFUSE OR LEAVE THE GAME, CREATING THE ILLUSION THAT THE PLAYER IS ADVANTAGED.
THIS IS THE FIRST TRAP!!
Yes
THE "YES" CARD... IF THIS IS THE LAST TO REMAIN, I'LL HAVE TO JOIN HER.
THAT MEANS I'LL HAVE TO OBEY ALL THE RULES THEY ADD LATER. IT MEANS COMPLETE DEFEAT.
BUT "NO" IS ACTUALLY NOT DIFFERENT FROM "YES."
IT PRETENDS TO BE MY FRIEND, BUT "NO" WILL BARE ITS FANGS AS SOON AS THE GAME BEGINS! IT DEPENDS ON...
...THE EXPLANATIONS...
...OF THE "YES?" AND "NO?" CARDS!!
QB
Yes?
No?
D

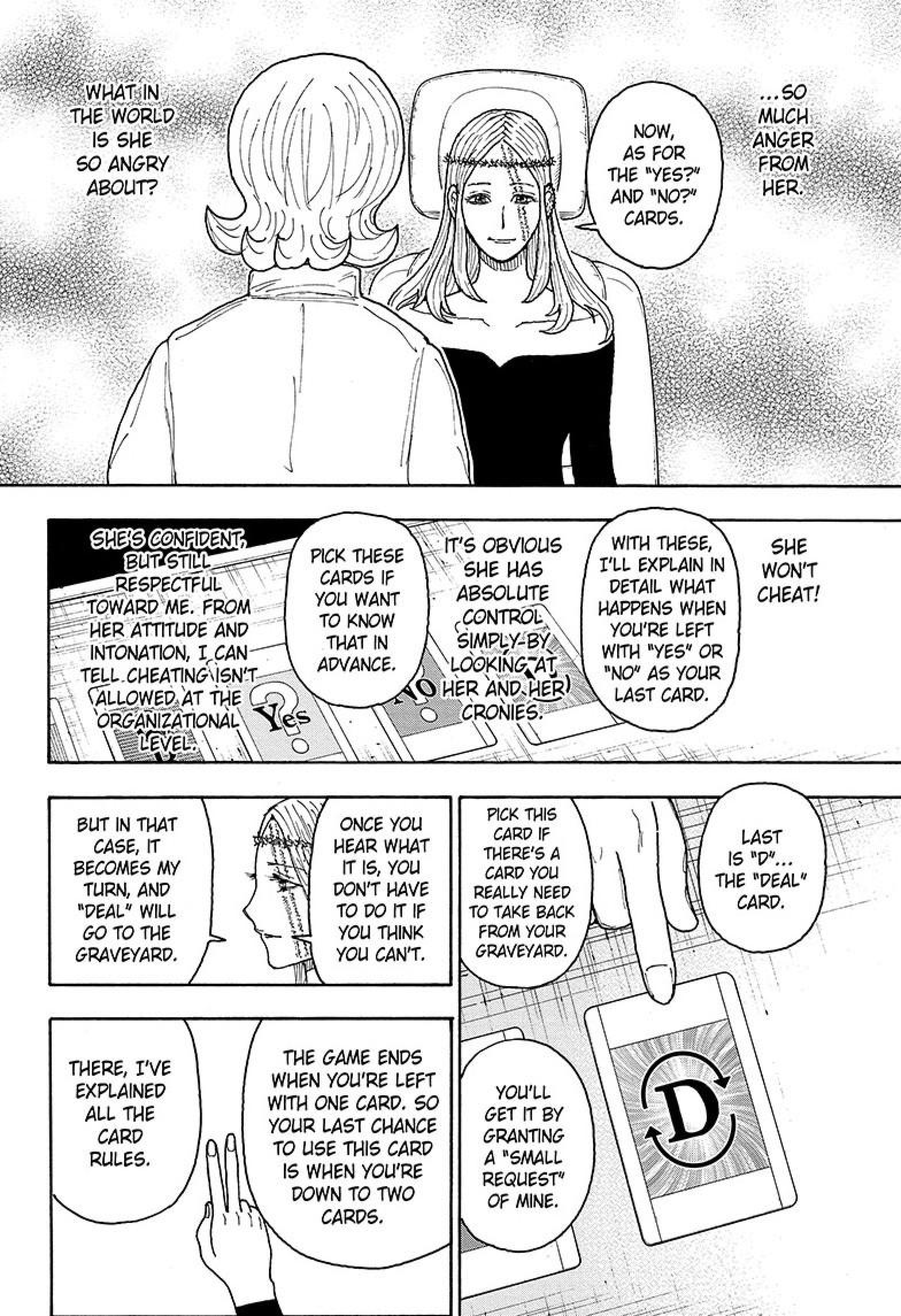

SHE'LL EXPLAIN ALL SORTS OF HORRIBLE THINGS THAT WOULD HAPPEN AROUND ME IF I SAY NO!!
THIS WILL KEEP GOING UNTIL I DECIDE THAT SAYING YES IS BETTER.
SO "NO" AND "JOKER" ARE POINTLESS. MY REAL CARDS ARE "RETURN" AND "X". TWO OUT OF FIVE... 40 PERCENT ISN'T SUCH BAD ODDS, CONSIDERING THE SITUATION.
WELL, THAT'S THE SECOND TRAP!
NO MATTER HOW MANY CARDS ARE GOOD FOR ME...
...NONE OF IT ACTUALLY MATTERS.
Yes
NO
R
Joker
AS LONG AS THE GAME ENTAILS HER PICKING MY CARDS...
...THEY CAN CHEAT ALL THEY WANT.
OKAY THEN...
AND THE THIRD TRAP...
...IS THE WORST!!
...I'LL EXPLAIN MY CARDS.

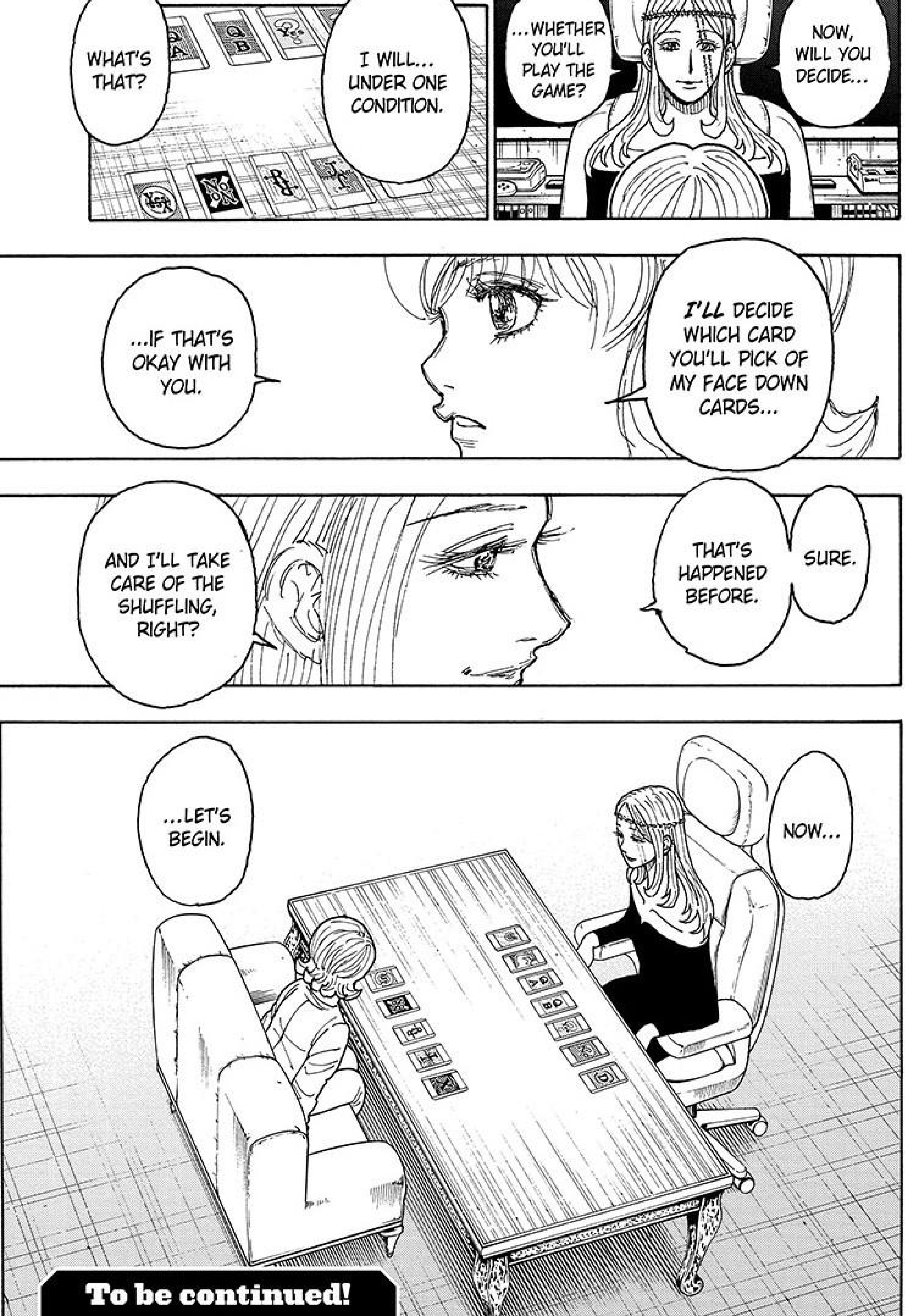

THE "AIM" CARD.
TAP
IF YOU PICK THIS CARD...
...I'LL EXPLAIN MY GOALS.
WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO BY INVITING YOU HERE AND RECRUITING YOU.
I'LL TRY TO BE AS CONCISE AS I CAN, BUT IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO MY GOALS, I'LL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.
NEXT, THE "POWER" CARD.
IF YOU PICK THIS CARD...
...I'LL EXPLAIN MY ABILITY.

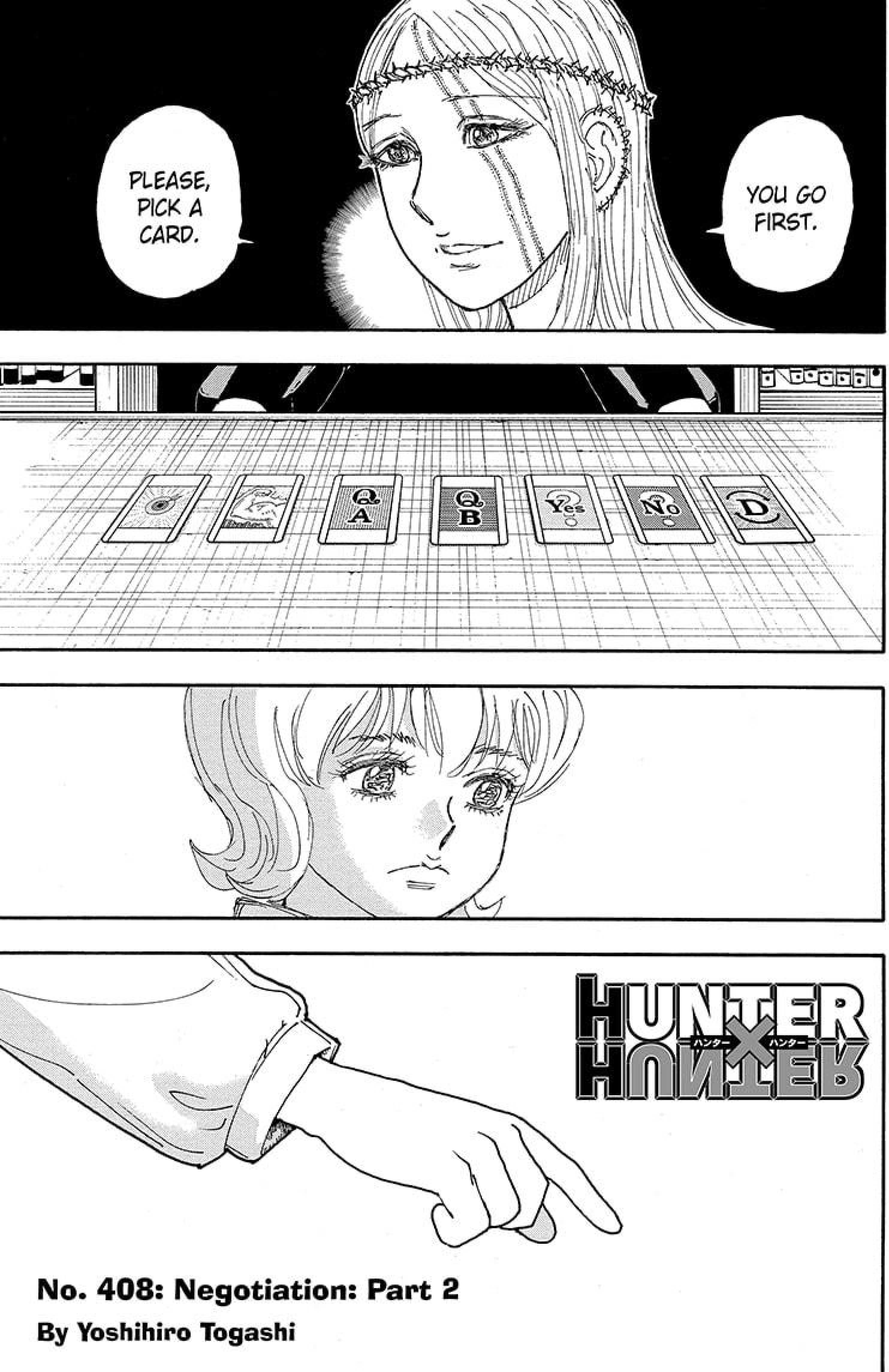

ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT GO OVER YOUR HEAD A LITTLE BIT...
...I'LL TELL YOU ONLY THE TRUTH, WITHOUT HIDING ANYTHING.
I'LL GO INTO AS MUCH DETAIL AS YOU WANT, UNTIL YOU UNDERSTAND.
BUT, AGAIN... THE LONGER THIS TAKES, THE MORE RISK TO BOTH OF US.
I MIGHT HAVE TO TALK PRETTY QUICKLY.
Q A
"QUESTION A."
I'LL ANSWER AS MANY QUESTIONS AS YOU HAVE, AS MANY TIMES AS YOU WANT.
EXCEPT ANYTHING ABOUT MY GOALS OR MY ABILITY.
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THOSE THINGS, USE *THESE* CARDS.
Q A
Q B
Yes
No
AND MY ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS...
...WILL ONLY BE IN THE FORM OF "YES" *OR* "NO," OR "YES" *AND* "NO!"


IF YOU WANT MORE DETAIL REGARDING AN ANSWER I GAVE TO ONE OF YOUR QUESTIONS...
QB
...YOU'LL HAVE TO PICK THE "QUESTION B" CARD ON A LATER TURN.
I'LL EXPLAIN IN GREATER DEPTH UNTIL IT'S CLEARED UP.
BUT ONLY ABOUT *ONE* QUESTION.
QB
AND IT MUST BE THE LAST QUESTION YOU ASKED DURING THE QUESTION A ROUND.
SO BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU BRING THE QUESTION A ROUND TO A CLOSE.
ALL RIGHT.
I DON'T NEED TO HEAR YES OR NO ANSWERS.
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO CONFIRM ABOUT THE WAY...
...YOU ANSWER. MAY I TRY IT OUT NOW?
GO AHEAD.
I'LL BE ABLE TO TELL...
...THROUGH HER TONE AND NON-VERBAL CUES.
YOU WILL NOT CHEAT WITHIN THE GAME AT ANY POINT!
YES OR NO?


NEGATIVE QUESTIONS CAN CREATE THE POTENTIAL FOR MISUNDERSTANDINGS.
IT'S QUITE IMPORTANT TO CLEAR UP ANY CONFUSION BEFOREHAND.
WHEN ANSWERING A NEGATIVE QUESTION SUCH AS, "YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT?"
Yes? No?
...THERE ARE CULTURES THAT REPLY, "*YES*, I HAVE NOT."
USUALLY, THE PERSON ANSWERS FOR THEMSELVES, AND "YES" AND "NO" ARE ABSOLUTE TERMS. THUS, "NO, I HAVE NOT."
BUT FOR SOME REASON, THESE PEOPLE FOCUS ON THE QUESTIONER'S PERSPECTIVE...
...AND ANSWER, "YES," MEANING, "YOU ARE CORRECT," OR "I AGREE WITH YOU."
MAYBE IT'S AN OLD HIERARCHY MINDSET OR THE PHILOSOPHY OF SELFLESS HOSPITALITY.
IN SOME DIALECTS, THE REFLEXIVE PRONOUN "SELF" GETS USED IN SECOND-PERSON CONTEXT, AS IF THEY'RE STEPPING INTO THE OTHERS' SHOES.
CRAZY, HUH, YOKOTANI?
SORRY, I DON'T EVEN REALIZE I DO THAT.
IT LOOKS LIKE THIS GAME WORKS AS AN INITIATION WHEN SOLICITING NEW MEMBERS... AND AN INTERVIEW.
YOUR ANSWER?
MORENA USES THIS EXCHANGE TO OBSERVE THE SUBJECT, TO EXAMINE THEIR PERSONALITY, INTELLIGENCE, AND TO JUDGE WHETHER THEY'RE COMPATIBLE FOR HER TEAM!
NO, I WILL NOT CHEAT.
I'M ANSWERING FROM MY PERSPECTIVE.
DOES THAT WORK FOR YOU?
YES.
I FEEL...
SHUR

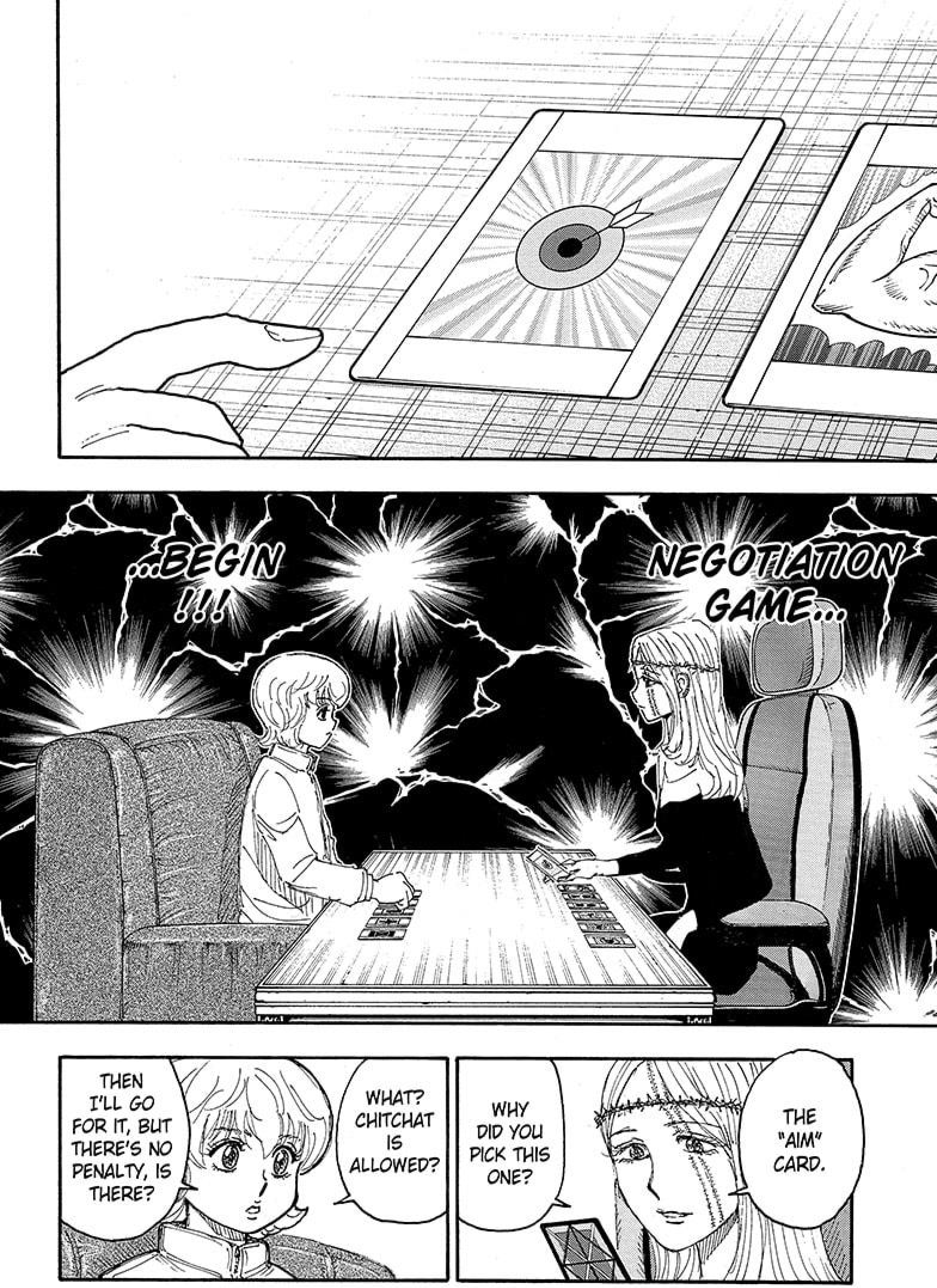

...SO MUCH ANGER FROM HER.
NOW, AS FOR THE "YES?" AND "NO?" CARDS.
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS SHE SO ANGRY ABOUT?
SHE WON'T CHEAT!
WITH THESE, I'LL EXPLAIN IN DETAIL WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU'RE LEFT WITH "YES" OR "NO" AS YOUR LAST CARD.
IT'S OBVIOUS SHE HAS ABSOLUTE CONTROL SIMPLY BY LOOKING AT HER AND HER CRONIES.
PICK THESE CARDS IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THAT IN ADVANCE.
SHE'S CONFIDENT, BUT STILL RESPECTFUL TOWARD ME. FROM HER ATTITUDE AND INTONATION, I CAN TELL CHEATING ISN'T ALLOWED AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL.
No
Yes
?
LAST IS "D"... THE "DEAL" CARD.
PICK THIS CARD IF THERE'S A CARD YOU REALLY NEED TO TAKE BACK FROM YOUR GRAVEYARD.
YOU'LL GET IT BY GRANTING A "SMALL REQUEST" OF MINE.
D
ONCE YOU HEAR WHAT IT IS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT IF YOU THINK YOU CAN'T.
BUT IN THAT CASE, IT BECOMES MY TURN, AND "DEAL" WILL GO TO THE GRAVEYARD.
THE GAME ENDS WHEN YOU'RE LEFT WITH ONE CARD. SO YOUR LAST CHANCE TO USE THIS CARD IS WHEN YOU'RE DOWN TO TWO CARDS.
THERE, I'VE EXPLAINED ALL THE CARD RULES.


NOW, WILL YOU DECIDE...
...WHETHER YOU'LL PLAY THE GAME?
I WILL... UNDER ONE CONDITION.
WHAT'S THAT?
I'LL DECIDE WHICH CARD YOU'LL PICK OF MY FACE DOWN CARDS...
...IF THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU.
SURE.
THAT'S HAPPENED BEFORE.
AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE SHUFFLING, RIGHT?
NOW...
...LET'S BEGIN.
To be continued!

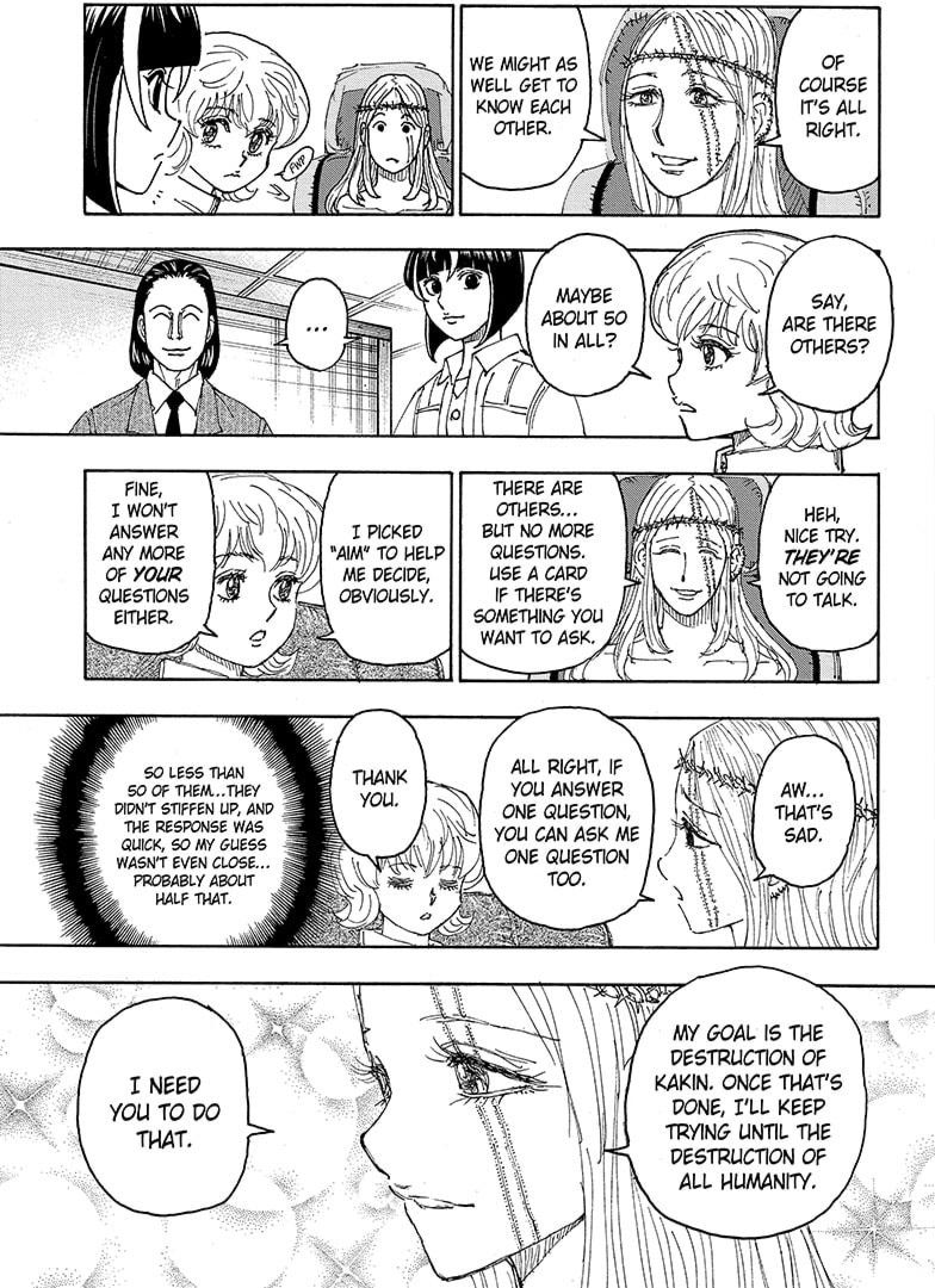

YOU GO FIRST.
PLEASE, PICK A CARD.
Q A
Q B
Yes
No
D
HUNTER×HUNTER
ハンター
ハンター

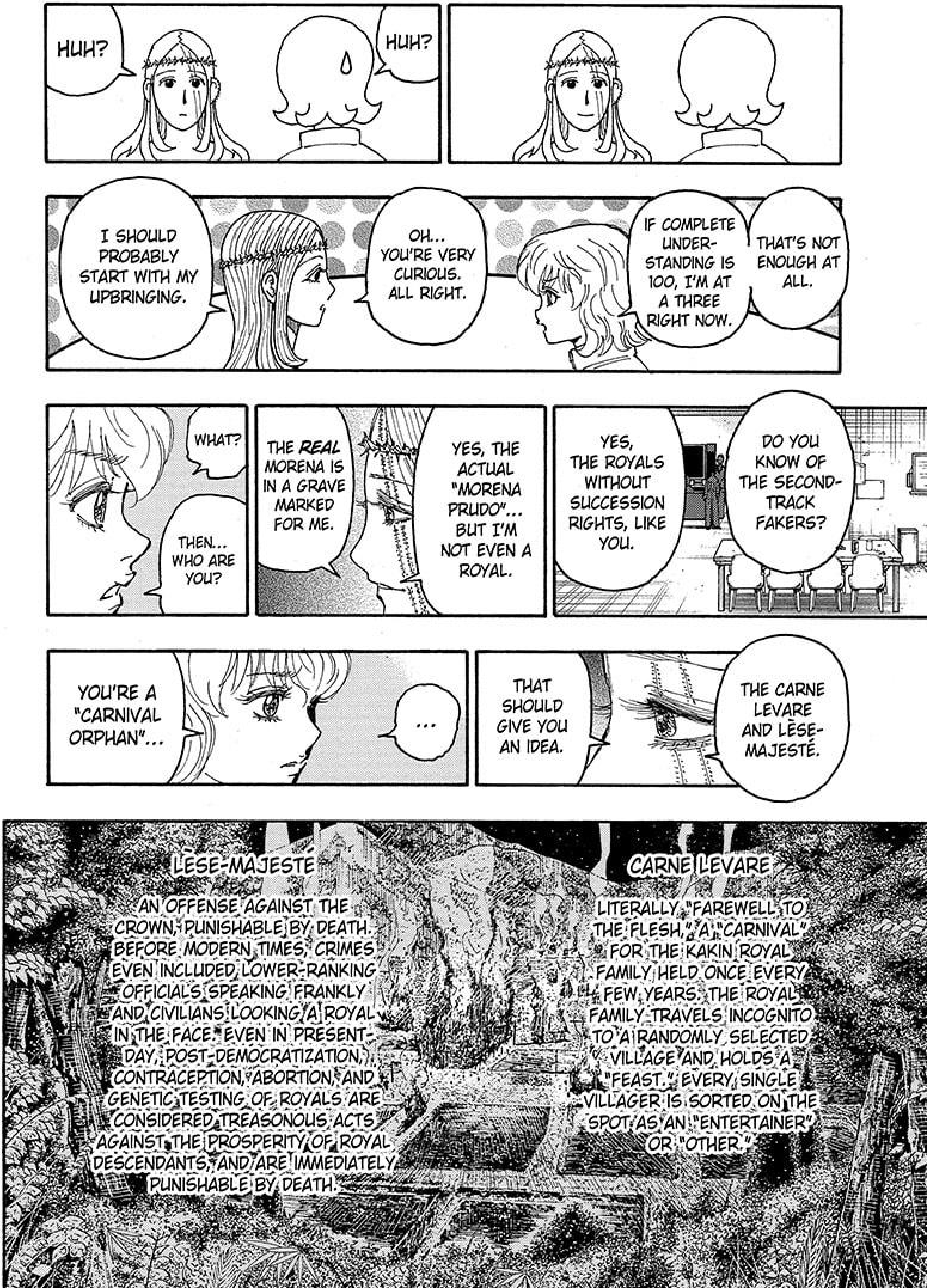
No. 408: Negotiation: Part 2

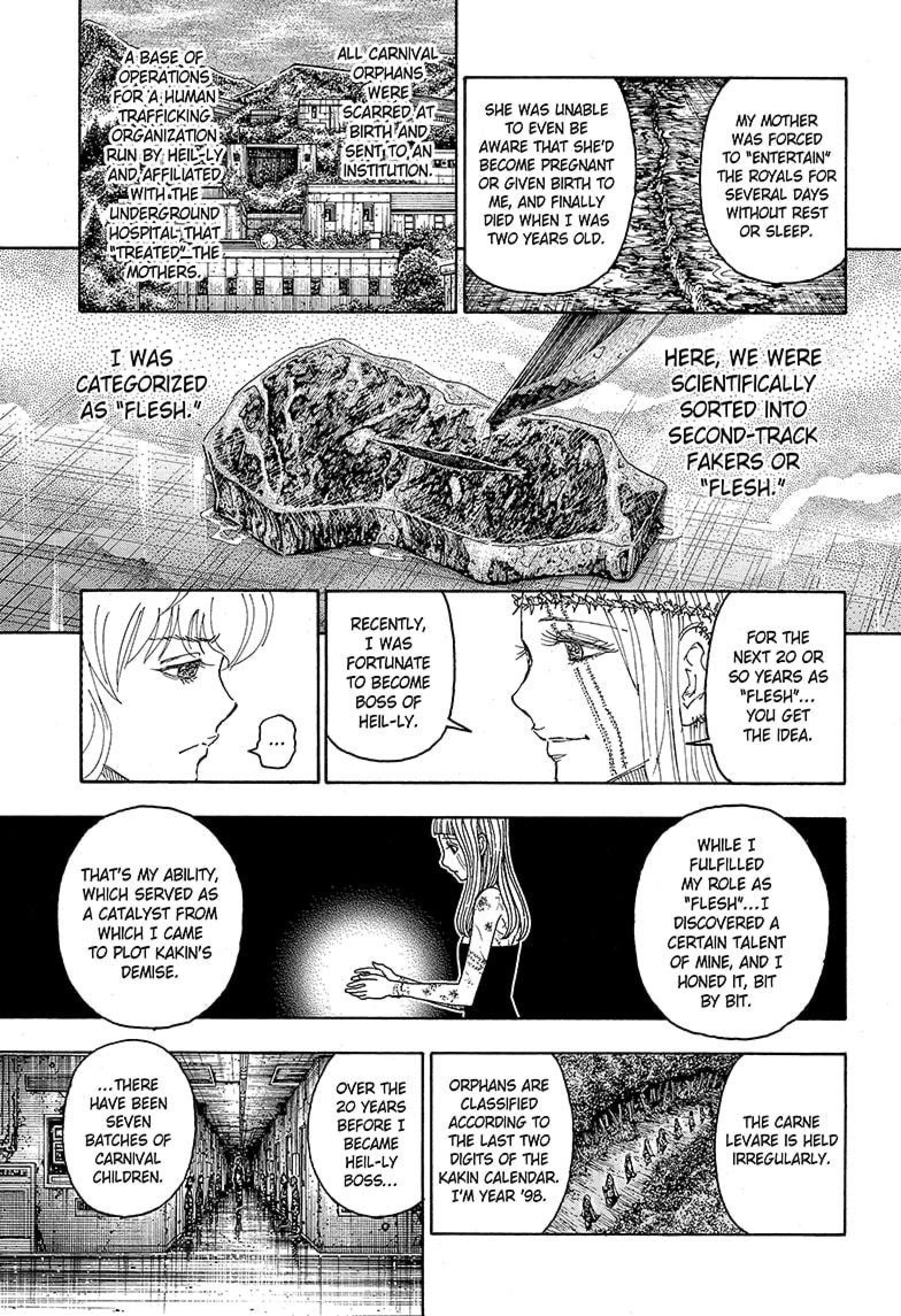
By Yoshihiro Togashi

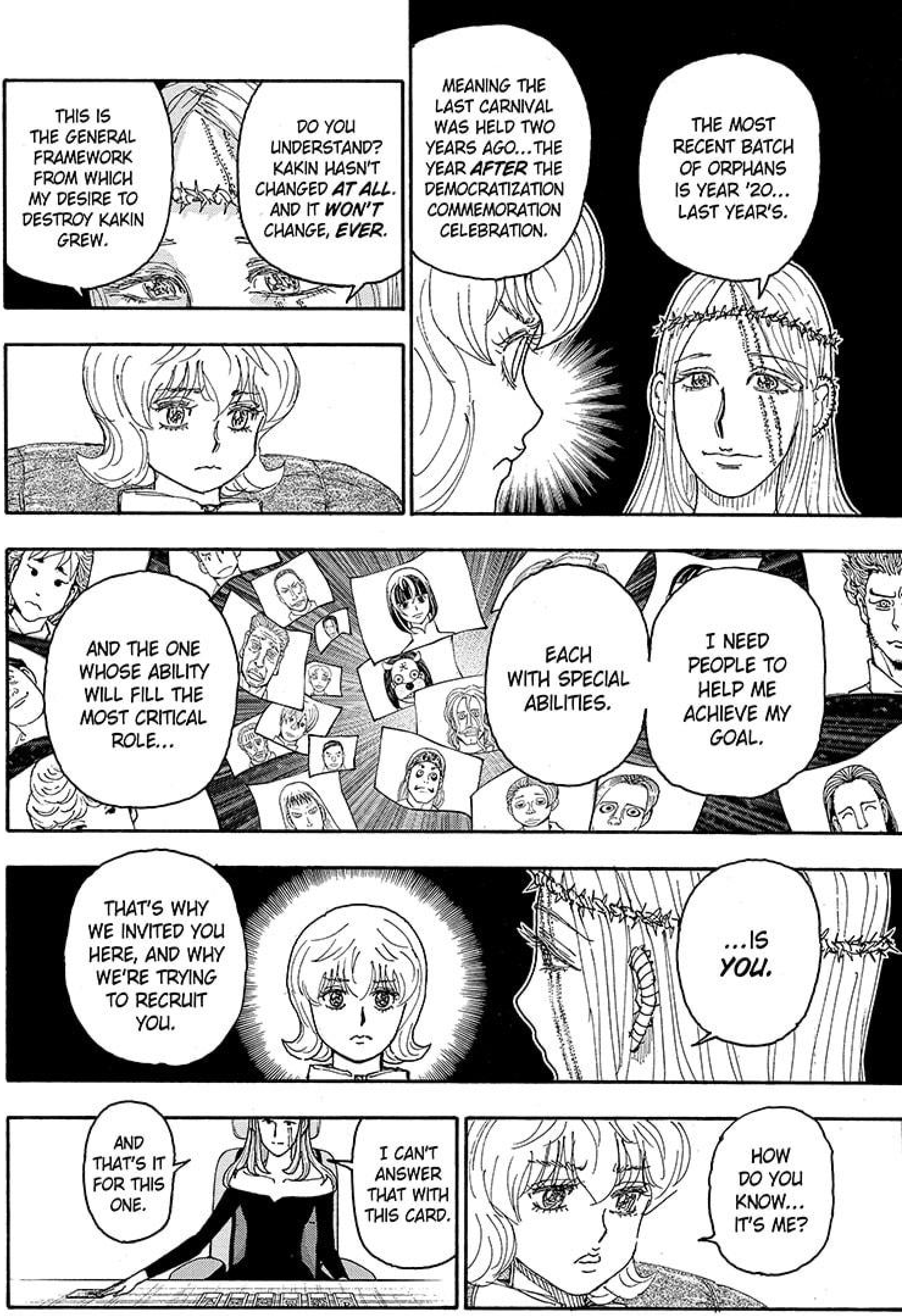

NEGOTIATION GAME...
...BEGIN!!!
THE "AIM" CARD.
WHY DID YOU PICK THIS ONE?
WHAT? CHITCHAT IS ALLOWED?
THEN I'LL GO FOR IT, BUT THERE'S NO PENALTY, IS THERE?

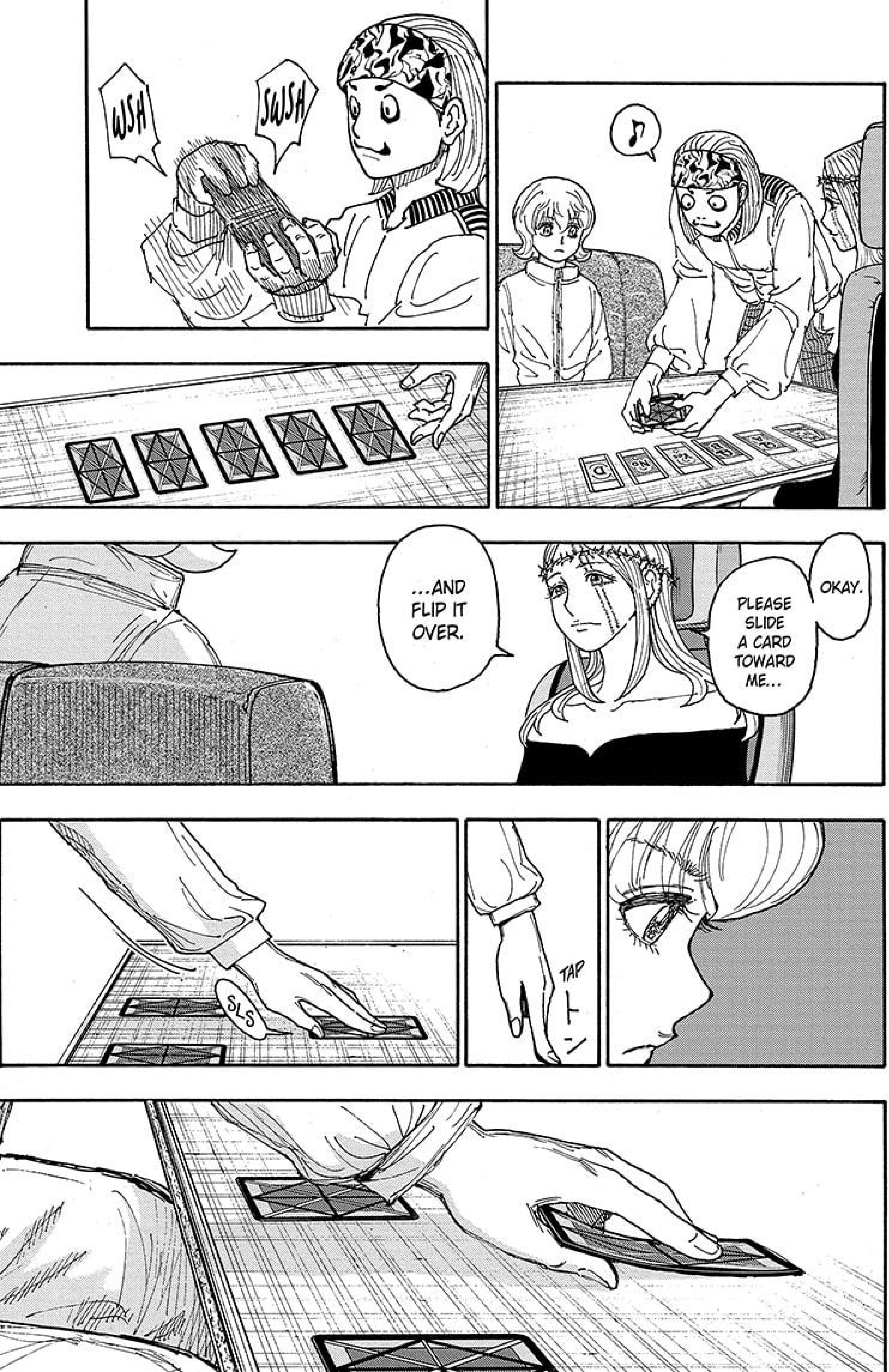
Translation: Lillian Olsen **Lettering: Mark McMurray**

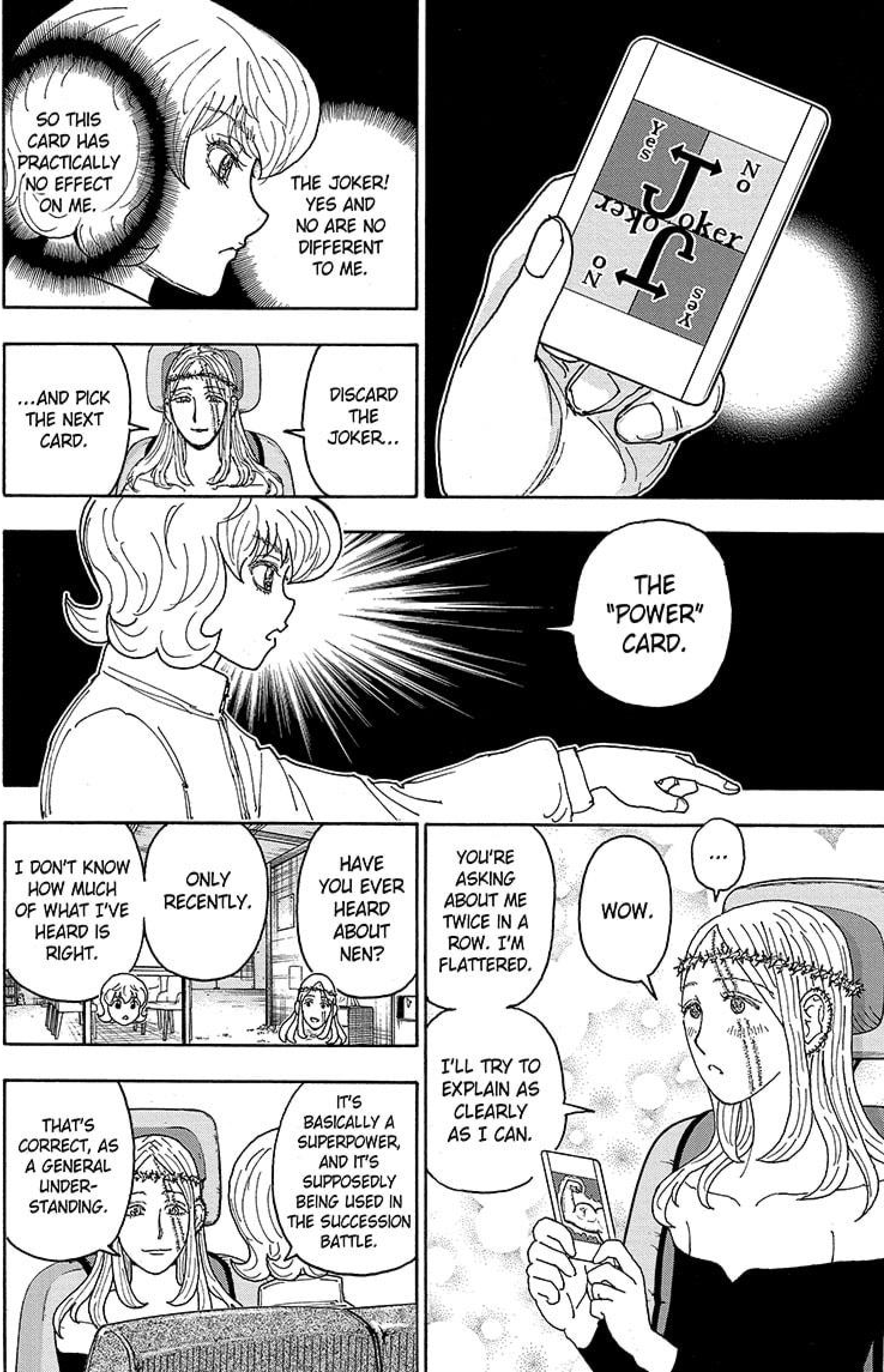

OF COURSE IT'S ALL RIGHT.
WE MIGHT AS WELL GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
FWP
SAY, ARE THERE OTHERS?
MAYBE ABOUT 50 IN ALL?
...
HEH, NICE TRY. *THEY'RE* NOT GOING TO TALK.
THERE ARE OTHERS... BUT NO MORE QUESTIONS. USE A CARD IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU WANT TO ASK.
I PICKED "AIM" TO HELP ME DECIDE, OBVIOUSLY.
FINE, I WON'T ANSWER ANY MORE OF *YOUR* QUESTIONS EITHER.
AW... THAT'S SAD.
ALL RIGHT, IF YOU ANSWER ONE QUESTION, YOU CAN ASK ME ONE QUESTION TOO.
THANK YOU.
SO LESS THAN 50 OF THEM...THEY DIDN'T STIFFEN UP, AND THE RESPONSE WAS QUICK, SO MY GUESS WASN'T EVEN CLOSE... PROBABLY ABOUT HALF THAT.
MY GOAL IS THE DESTRUCTION OF KAKIN. ONCE THAT'S DONE, I'LL KEEP TRYING UNTIL THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL HUMANITY.
I NEED YOU TO DO THAT.

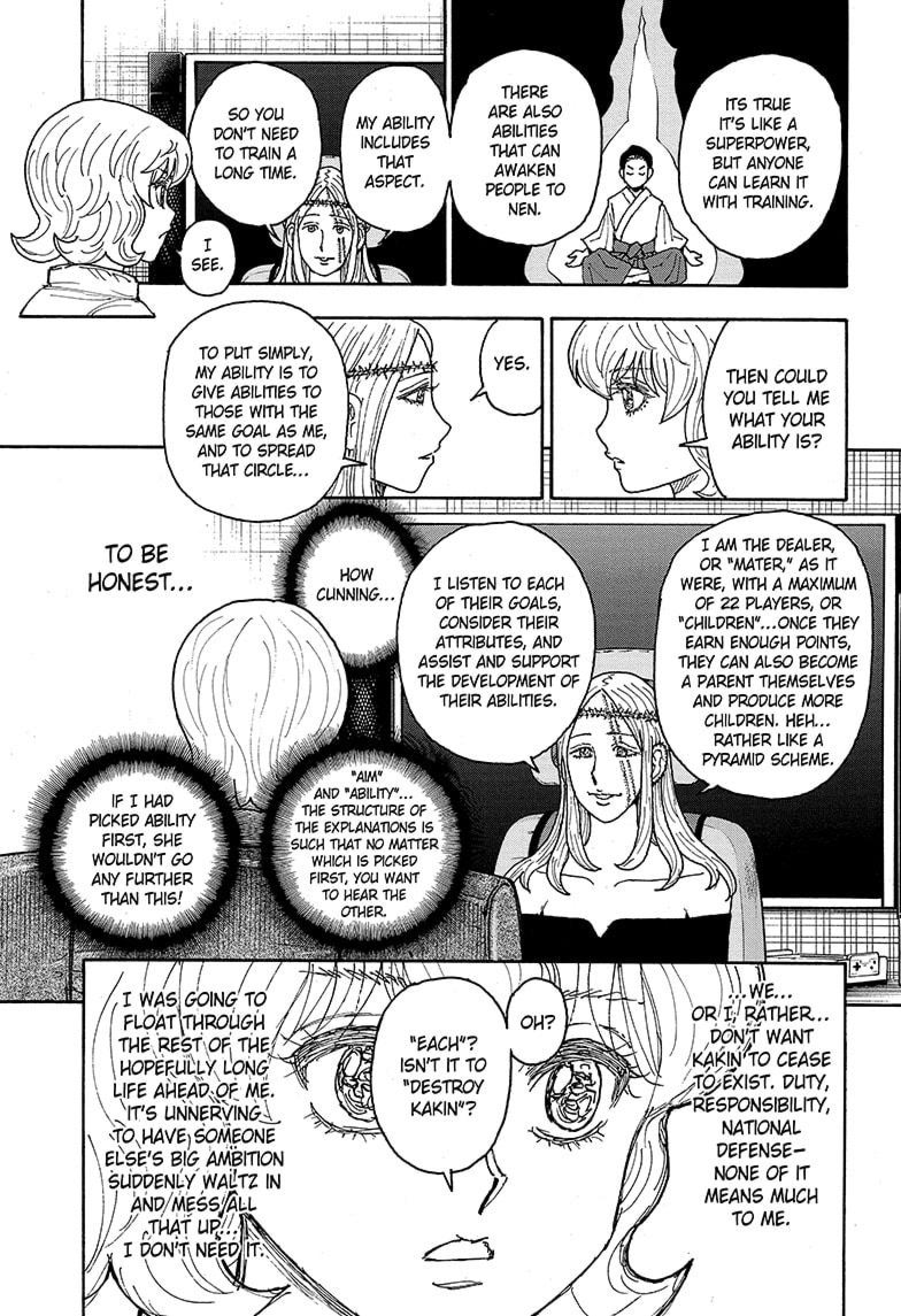

HUH?
HUH?
THAT'S NOT ENOUGH AT ALL.
IF COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING IS 100, I'M AT A THREE RIGHT NOW.
OH... YOU'RE VERY CURIOUS. ALL RIGHT.
I SHOULD PROBABLY START WITH MY UPBRINGING.
DO YOU KNOW OF THE SECOND-TRACK FAKERS?
YES, THE ROYALS WITHOUT SUCCESSION RIGHTS, LIKE YOU.
YES, THE ACTUAL "MORENA PRUDO"... BUT I'M NOT EVEN A ROYAL.
THE *REAL* MORENA IS IN A GRAVE MARKED FOR ME.
WHAT?
THEN... WHO ARE YOU?
THE CARNE LEVARE AND LÈSE-MAJESTÉ.
THAT SHOULD GIVE YOU AN IDEA.
...
YOU'RE A "CARNIVAL ORPHAN"...
CARNE LEVARE
LITERALLY "FAREWELL TO THE FLESH," A "CARNIVAL" FOR THE KAKIN ROYAL FAMILY HELD ONCE EVERY FEW YEARS. THE ROYAL FAMILY TRAVELS INCOGNITO TO A RANDOMLY SELECTED VILLAGE AND HOLDS A "FEAST." EVERY SINGLE VILLAGER IS SORTED ON THE SPOT AS AN "ENTERTAINER" OR "OTHER."
LÈSE-MAJESTÉ
AN OFFENSE AGAINST THE CROWN, PUNISHABLE BY DEATH. BEFORE MODERN TIMES, CRIMES EVEN INCLUDED LOWER-RANKING OFFICIALS SPEAKING FRANKLY AND CIVILIANS LOOKING A ROYAL IN THE FACE. EVEN IN PRESENT-DAY, POST-DEMOCRATIZATION, CONTRACEPTION, ABORTION, AND GENETIC TESTING OF ROYALS ARE CONSIDERED TREASONOUS ACTS AGAINST THE PROSPERITY OF ROYAL DESCENDANTS, AND ARE IMMEDIATELY PUNISHABLE BY DEATH.

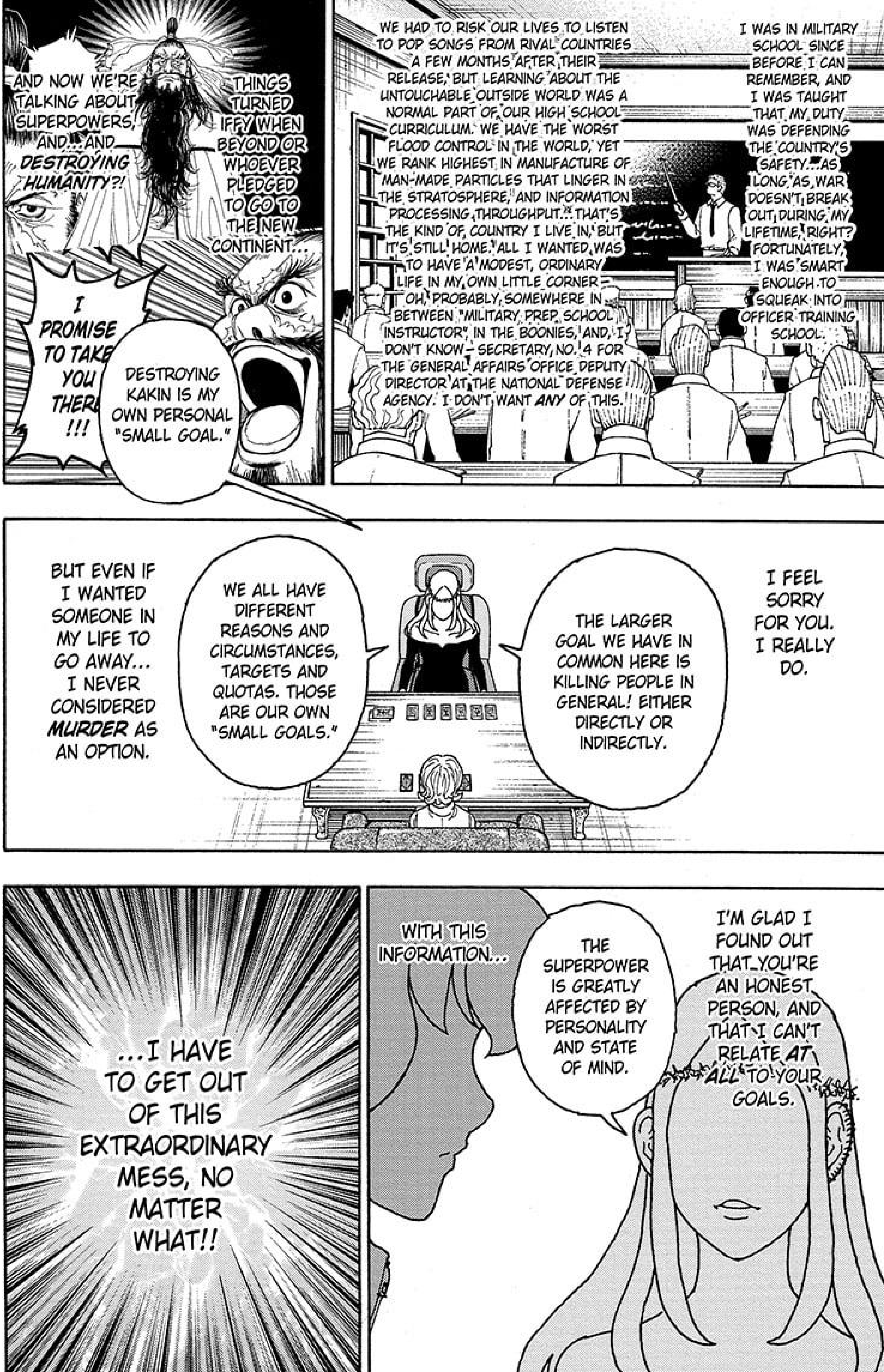

MY MOTHER WAS FORCED TO "ENTERTAIN" THE ROYALS FOR SEVERAL DAYS WITHOUT REST OR SLEEP.
SHE WAS UNABLE TO EVEN BE AWARE THAT SHE'D BECOME PREGNANT OR GIVEN BIRTH TO ME, AND FINALLY DIED WHEN I WAS TWO YEARS OLD.
ALL CARNIVAL ORPHANS WERE SCARRED AT BIRTH AND SENT TO AN INSTITUTION.
A BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR A HUMAN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION RUN BY HEIL-LY AND AFFILIATED WITH THE UNDERGROUND HOSPITAL THAT "TREATED" THE MOTHERS.
HERE, WE WERE SCIENTIFICALLY SORTED INTO SECOND-TRACK FAKERS OR "FLESH."
I WAS CATEGORIZED AS "FLESH."
FOR THE NEXT 20 OR SO YEARS AS "FLESH"... YOU GET THE IDEA.
RECENTLY, I WAS FORTUNATE TO BECOME BOSS OF HEIL-LY.
...
WHILE I FULFILLED MY ROLE AS "FLESH"...I DISCOVERED A CERTAIN TALENT OF MINE, AND I HONED IT, BIT BY BIT.
THAT'S MY ABILITY, WHICH SERVED AS A CATALYST FROM WHICH I CAME TO PLOT KAKIN'S DEMISE.
THE CARNE LEVARE IS HELD IRREGULARLY.
ORPHANS ARE CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO THE LAST TWO DIGITS OF THE KAKIN CALENDAR. I'M YEAR '98.
OVER THE 20 YEARS BEFORE I BECAME HEIL-LY BOSS...
...THERE HAVE BEEN SEVEN BATCHES OF CARNIVAL CHILDREN.

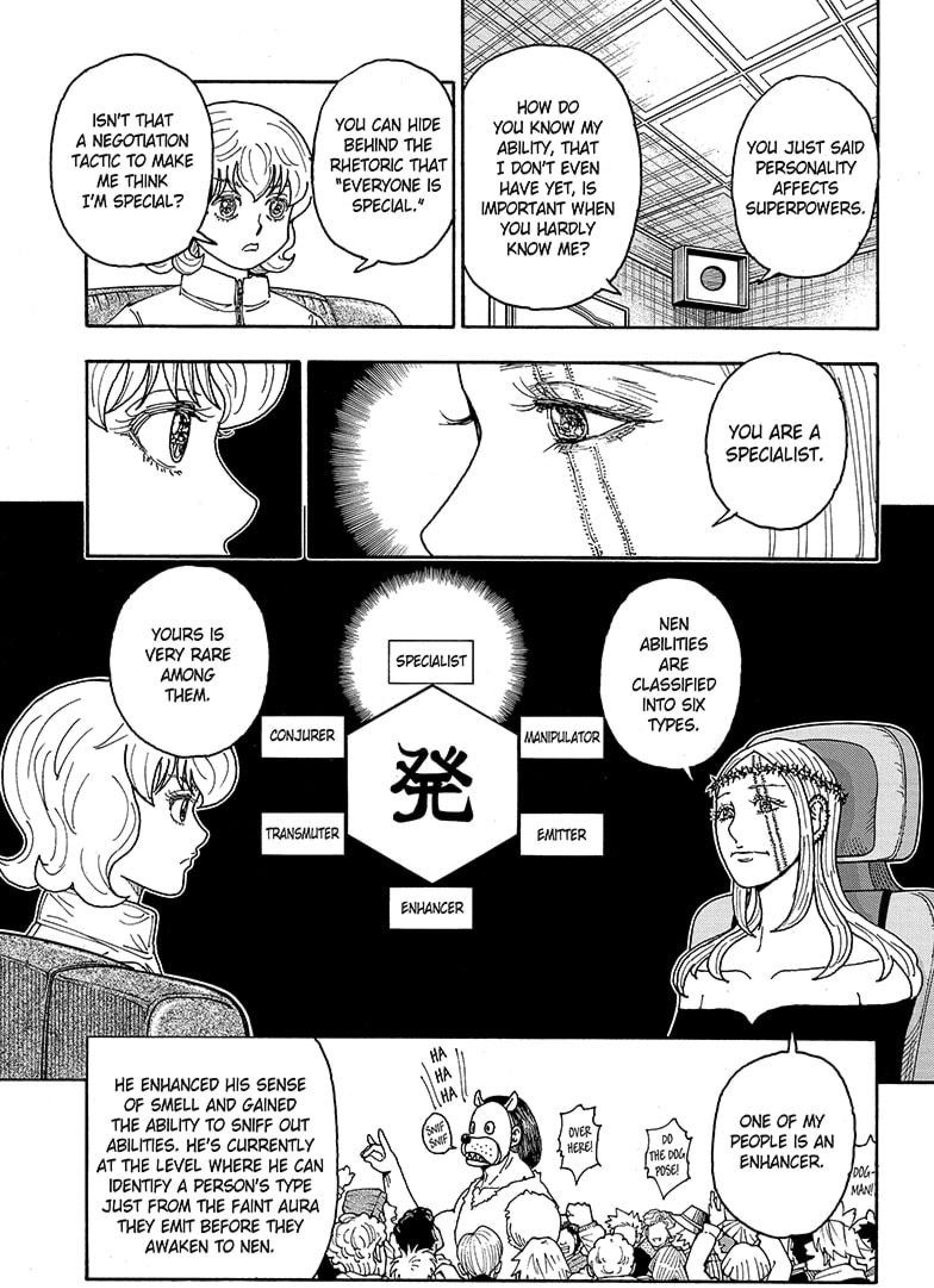

THE MOST RECENT BATCH OF ORPHANS IS YEAR '20... LAST YEAR'S.
MEANING THE LAST CARNIVAL WAS HELD TWO YEARS AGO...THE YEAR ***AFTER*** THE DEMOCRATIZATION COMMEMORATION CELEBRATION.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND? KAKIN HASN'T CHANGED ***AT ALL.*** AND IT ***WON'T*** CHANGE, ***EVER.***
THIS IS THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK FROM WHICH MY DESIRE TO DESTROY KAKIN GREW.
I NEED PEOPLE TO HELP ME ACHIEVE MY GOAL.
EACH WITH SPECIAL ABILITIES.
AND THE ONE WHOSE ABILITY WILL FILL THE MOST CRITICAL ROLE...
...IS ***YOU.***
THAT'S WHY WE INVITED YOU HERE, AND WHY WE'RE TRYING TO RECRUIT YOU.
HOW DO YOU KNOW... IT'S ME?
I CAN'T ANSWER THAT WITH THIS CARD.
AND THAT'S IT FOR THIS ONE.

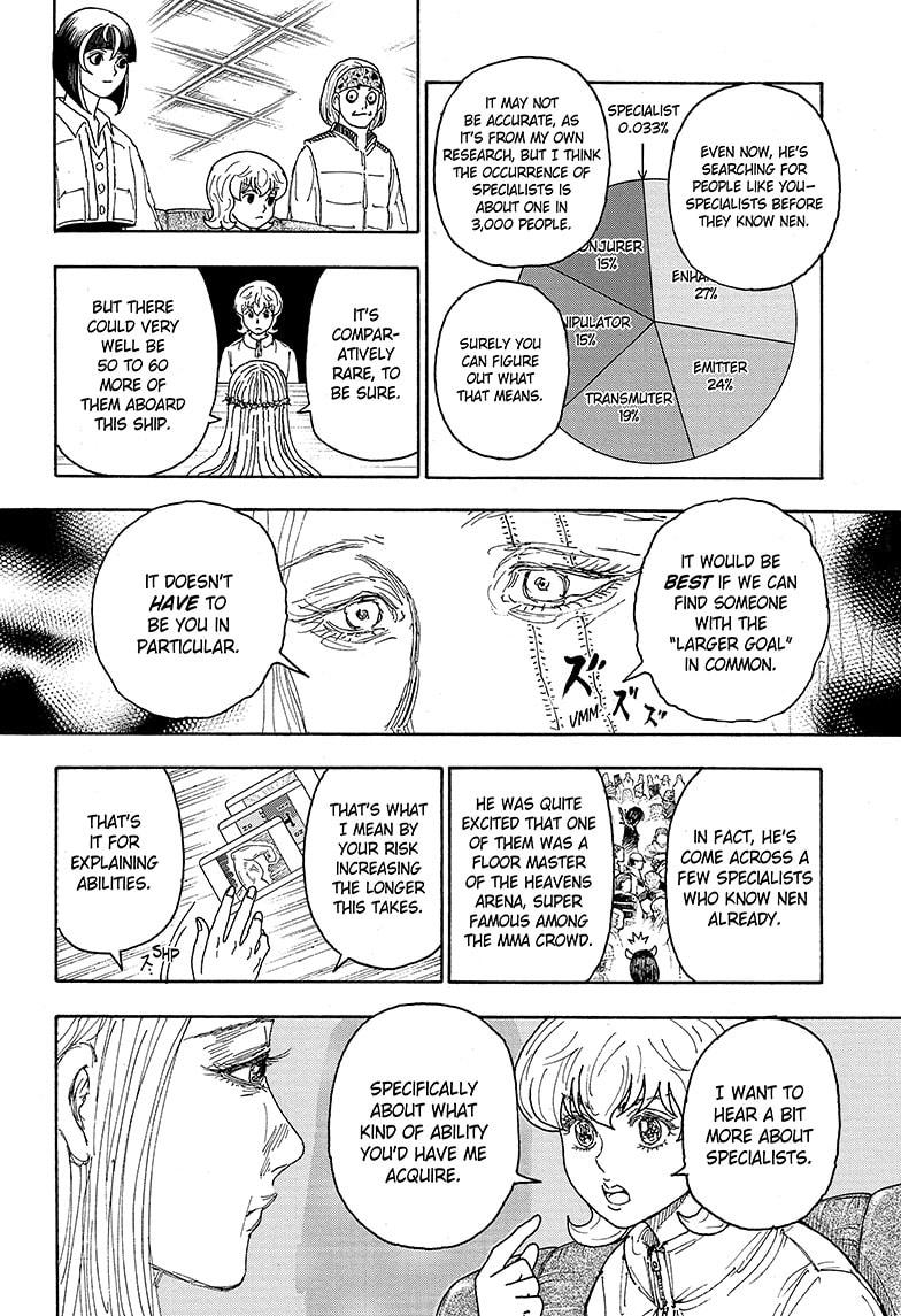

SWSH
WSH
♪
OKAY.
PLEASE SLIDE A CARD TOWARD ME…
…AND FLIP IT OVER.
TAP
SLS

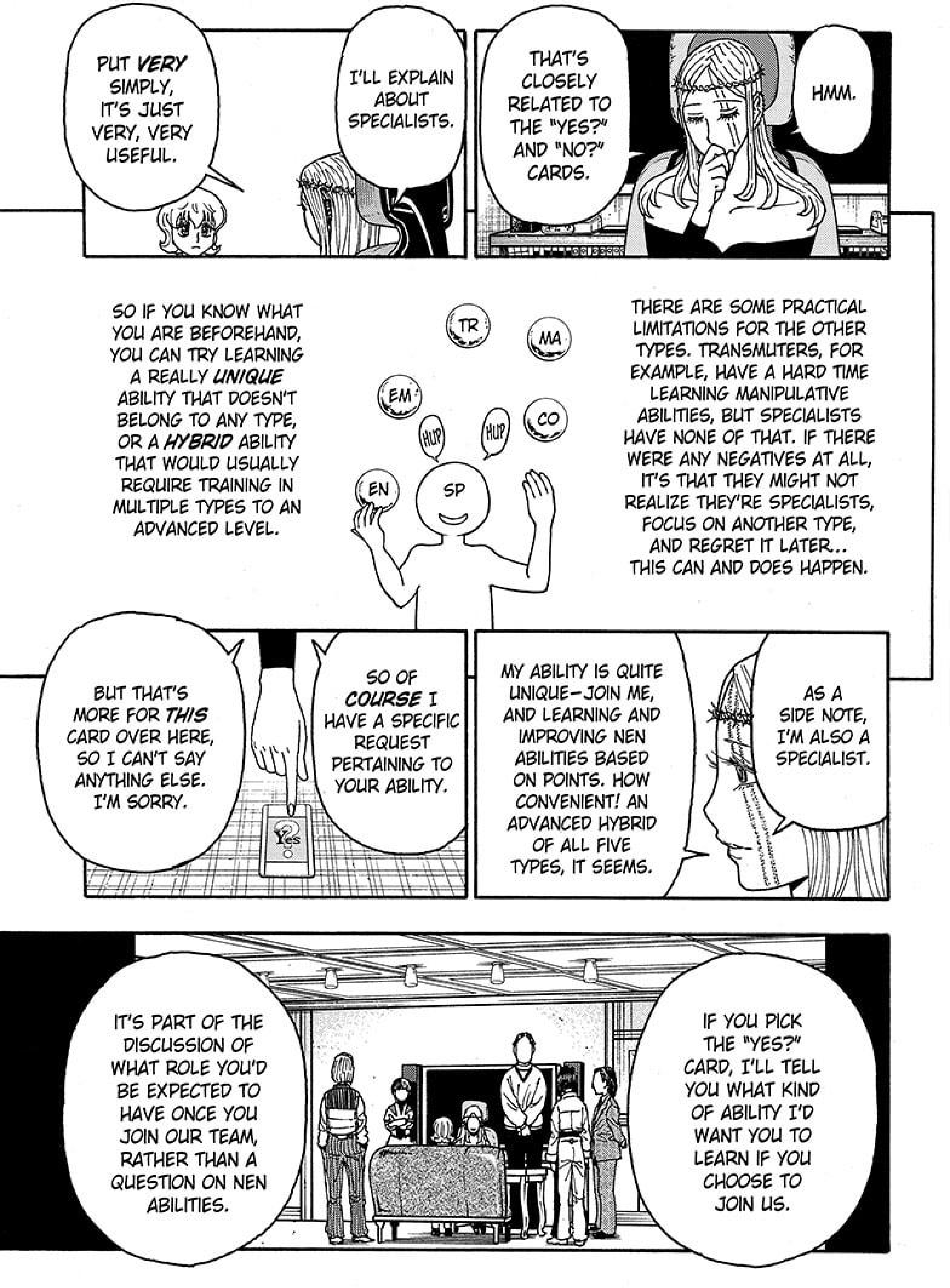

Yes
No
J
Joker
THE JOKER! YES AND NO ARE NO DIFFERENT TO ME.
SO THIS CARD HAS PRACTICALLY NO EFFECT ON ME.
DISCARD THE JOKER...
...AND PICK THE NEXT CARD.
THE "POWER" CARD.
...
WOW.
YOU'RE ASKING ABOUT ME TWICE IN A ROW. I'M FLATTERED.
I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN AS CLEARLY AS I CAN.
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ABOUT NEN?
ONLY RECENTLY.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF WHAT I'VE HEARD IS RIGHT.
IT'S BASICALLY A SUPERPOWER, AND IT'S SUPPOSEDLY BEING USED IN THE SUCCESSION BATTLE.
THAT'S CORRECT, AS A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING.

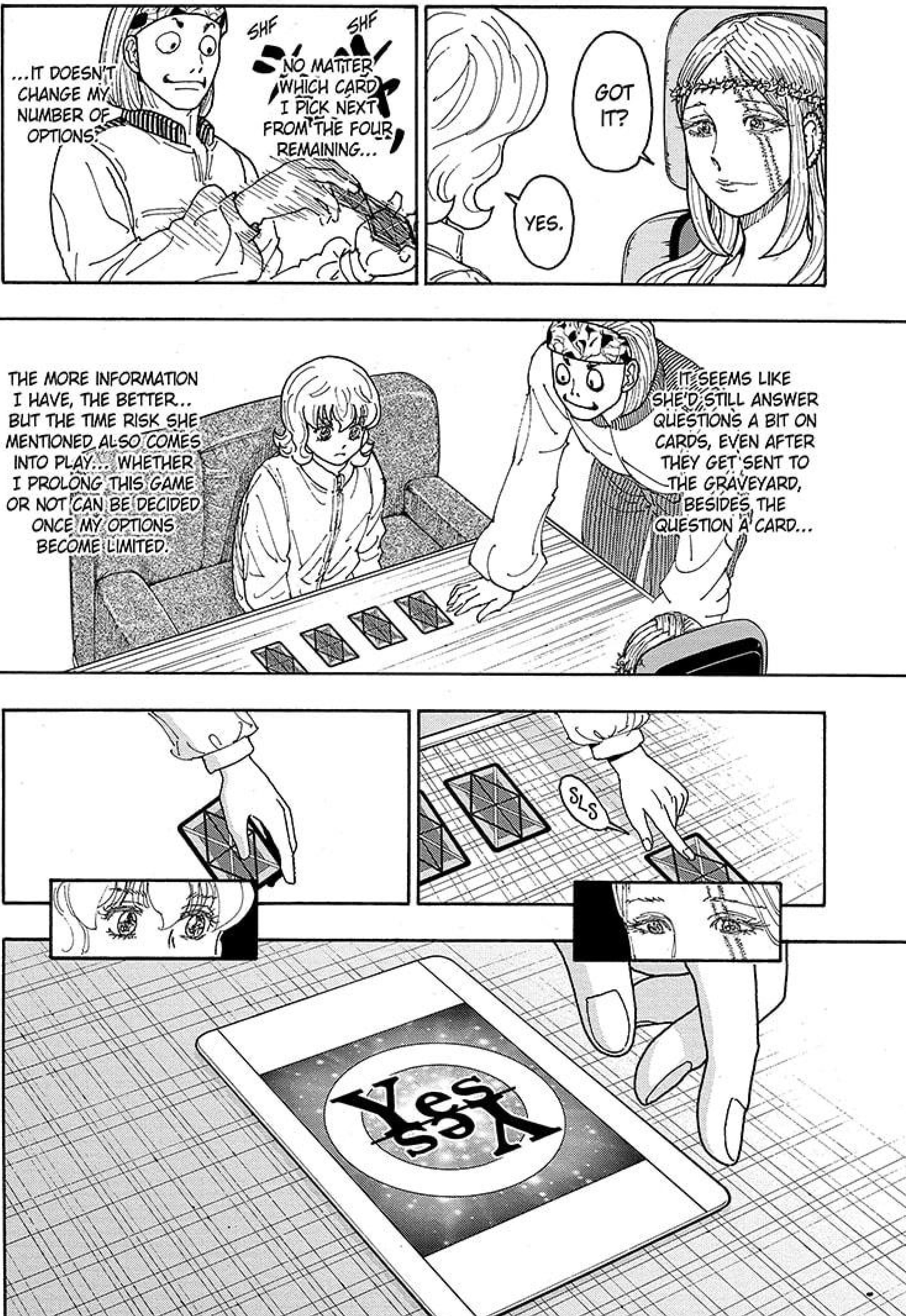

ITS TRUE IT'S LIKE A SUPERPOWER, BUT ANYONE CAN LEARN IT WITH TRAINING.
THERE ARE ALSO ABILITIES THAT CAN AWAKEN PEOPLE TO NEN.
MY ABILITY INCLUDES THAT ASPECT.
SO YOU DON'T NEED TO TRAIN A LONG TIME.
I SEE.
THEN COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT YOUR ABILITY IS?
YES.
TO PUT SIMPLY, MY ABILITY IS TO GIVE ABILITIES TO THOSE WITH THE SAME GOAL AS ME, AND TO SPREAD THAT CIRCLE...
I AM THE DEALER, OR "MATER," AS IT WERE, WITH A MAXIMUM OF 22 PLAYERS, OR "CHILDREN"...ONCE THEY EARN ENOUGH POINTS, THEY CAN ALSO BECOME A PARENT THEMSELVES AND PRODUCE MORE CHILDREN. HEH... RATHER LIKE A PYRAMID SCHEME.
I LISTEN TO EACH OF THEIR GOALS, CONSIDER THEIR ATTRIBUTES, AND ASSIST AND SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR ABILITIES.
HOW CUNNING...
TO BE HONEST...
"AIM" AND "ABILITY"... THE STRUCTURE OF THE EXPLANATIONS IS SUCH THAT NO MATTER WHICH IS PICKED FIRST, YOU WANT TO HEAR THE OTHER.
IF I HAD PICKED ABILITY FIRST, SHE WOULDN'T GO ANY FURTHER THAN THIS!
...WE... OR I, RATHER... DON'T WANT KAKIN TO CEASE TO EXIST. DUTY, RESPONSIBILITY, NATIONAL DEFENSE— NONE OF IT MEANS MUCH TO ME.
OH?
"EACH"? ISN'T IT TO "DESTROY KAKIN"?
I WAS GOING TO FLOAT THROUGH THE REST OF THE HOPEFULLY LONG LIFE AHEAD OF ME. IT'S UNNERVING TO HAVE SOMEONE ELSE'S BIG AMBITION SUDDENLY WALTZ IN AND MESS ALL THAT UP... I DON'T NEED IT.

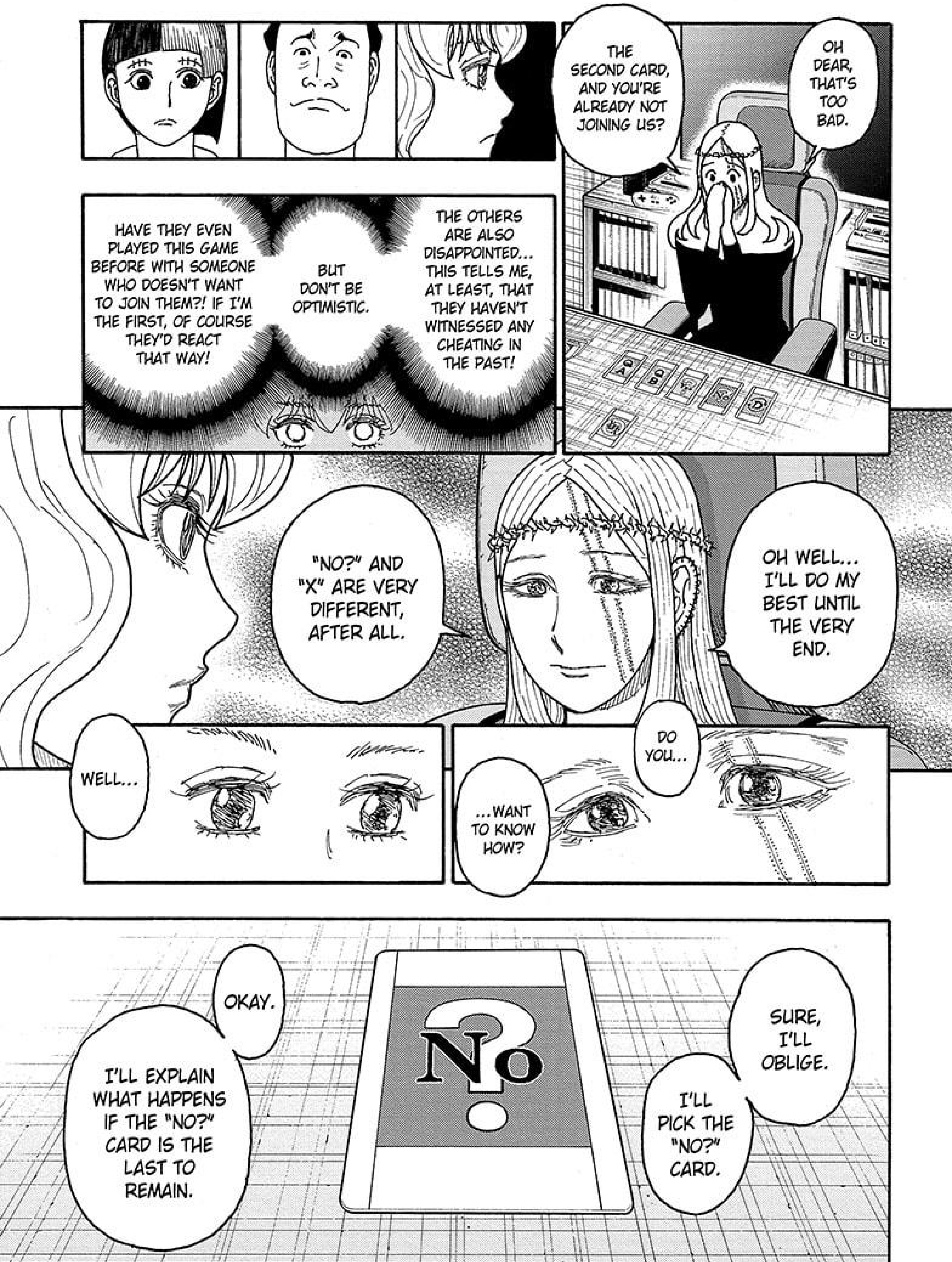

I WAS IN MILITARY SCHOOL SINCE BEFORE I CAN REMEMBER, AND I WAS TAUGHT THAT MY DUTY WAS DEFENDING THE COUNTRY'S SAFETY... AS LONG AS WAR DOESN'T BREAK OUT DURING MY LIFETIME, RIGHT? FORTUNATELY, I WAS SMART ENOUGH TO SQUEAK INTO OFFICER TRAINING SCHOOL.
WE HAD TO RISK OUR LIVES TO LISTEN TO POP SONGS FROM RIVAL COUNTRIES A FEW MONTHS AFTER THEIR RELEASE, BUT LEARNING ABOUT THE UNTOUCHABLE OUTSIDE WORLD WAS A NORMAL PART OF OUR HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM. WE HAVE THE WORST FLOOD CONTROL IN THE WORLD, YET WE RANK HIGHEST IN MANUFACTURE OF MAN-MADE PARTICLES THAT LINGER IN THE STRATOSPHERE, AND INFORMATION PROCESSING THROUGHPUT... THAT'S THE KIND OF COUNTRY I LIVE IN, BUT IT'S STILL HOME. ALL I WANTED WAS TO HAVE A MODEST, ORDINARY LIFE IN MY OWN LITTLE CORNER -- OH, PROBABLY SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN "MILITARY PREP SCHOOL INSTRUCTOR" IN THE BOONIES, AND, I DON'T KNOW -- SECRETARY NO. 4 FOR THE GENERAL AFFAIRS OFFICE DEPUTY DIRECTOR AT THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AGENCY. I DON'T WANT *ANY* OF THIS.
THINGS TURNED IFFY WHEN BEYOND OR WHOEVER PLEDGED TO GO TO THE NEW CONTINENT...
AND NOW WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SUPERPOWERS, AND... AND *DESTROYING HUMANITY*?!
I PROMISE TO TAKE YOU THERE!!!
DESTROYING KAKIN IS MY OWN PERSONAL "SMALL GOAL."
I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. I REALLY DO.
THE LARGER GOAL WE HAVE IN COMMON HERE IS KILLING PEOPLE IN GENERAL! EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY.
WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT REASONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, TARGETS AND QUOTAS. THOSE ARE OUR OWN "SMALL GOALS."
BUT EVEN IF I WANTED SOMEONE IN MY LIFE TO GO AWAY... I NEVER CONSIDERED *MURDER* AS AN OPTION.
I'M GLAD I FOUND OUT THAT YOU'RE AN HONEST PERSON, AND THAT I CAN'T RELATE *AT ALL* TO YOUR GOALS.
THE SUPERPOWER IS GREATLY AFFECTED BY PERSONALITY AND STATE OF MIND.
WITH THIS INFORMATION...
...I HAVE TO GET OUT OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY MESS, NO MATTER WHAT!!

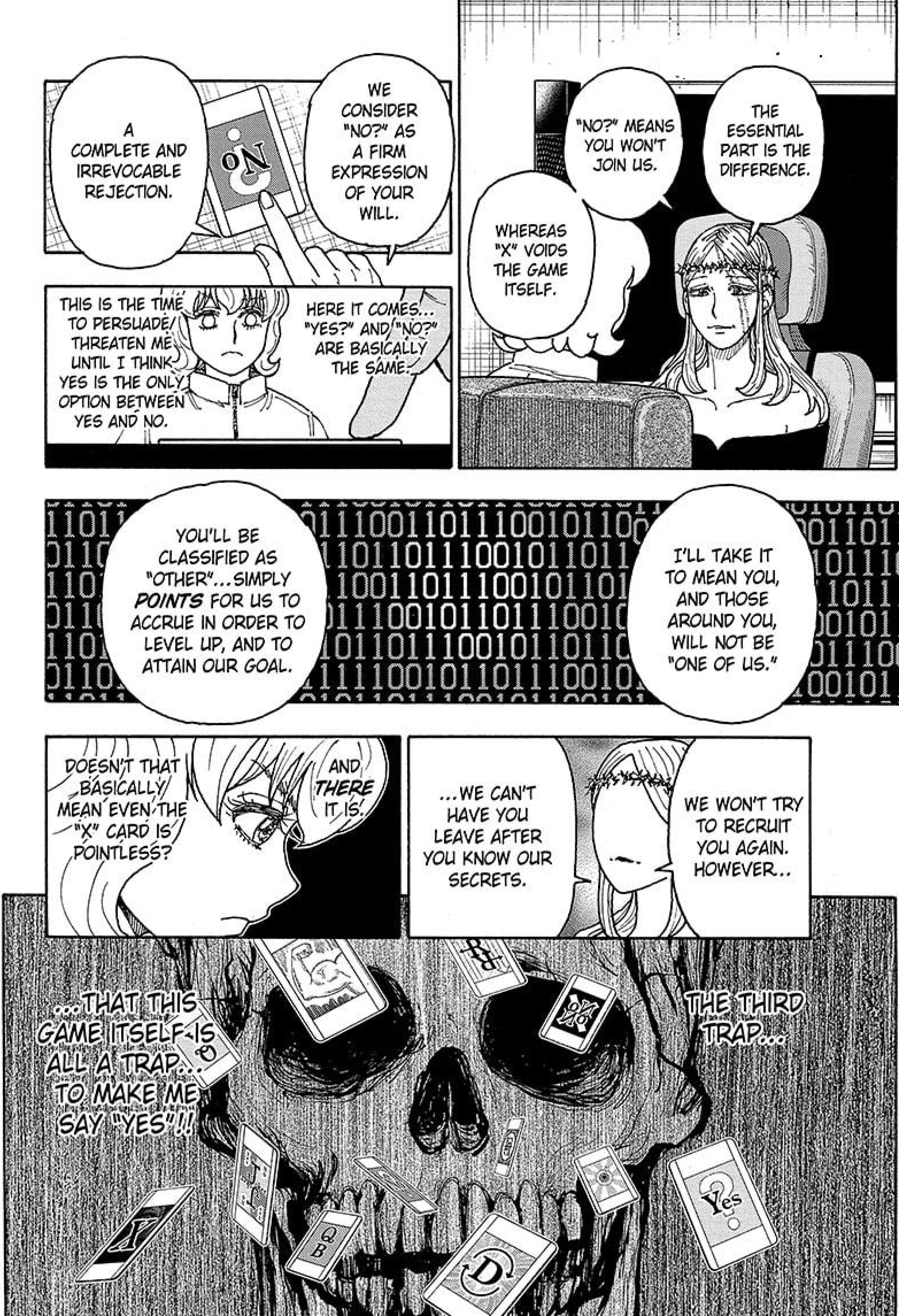

YOU JUST SAID PERSONALITY AFFECTS SUPERPOWERS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY ABILITY, THAT I DON'T EVEN HAVE YET, IS IMPORTANT WHEN YOU HARDLY KNOW ME?
YOU CAN HIDE BEHIND THE RHETORIC THAT "EVERYONE IS SPECIAL."
ISN'T THAT A NEGOTIATION TACTIC TO MAKE ME THINK I'M SPECIAL?
YOU ARE A SPECIALIST.
NEN ABILITIES ARE CLASSIFIED INTO SIX TYPES.
SPECIALIST
発
MANIPULATOR
EMITTER
ENHANCER
TRANSMUTER
CONJURER
YOURS IS VERY RARE AMONG THEM.
ONE OF MY PEOPLE IS AN ENHANCER.
DOG-MAN!
DO THE DOG POSE!
OVER HERE!
HA HA HA
SNIFF SNIFF
HE ENHANCED HIS SENSE OF SMELL AND GAINED THE ABILITY TO SNIFF OUT ABILITIES. HE'S CURRENTLY AT THE LEVEL WHERE HE CAN IDENTIFY A PERSON'S TYPE JUST FROM THE FAINT AURA THEY EMIT BEFORE THEY AWAKEN TO NEN.

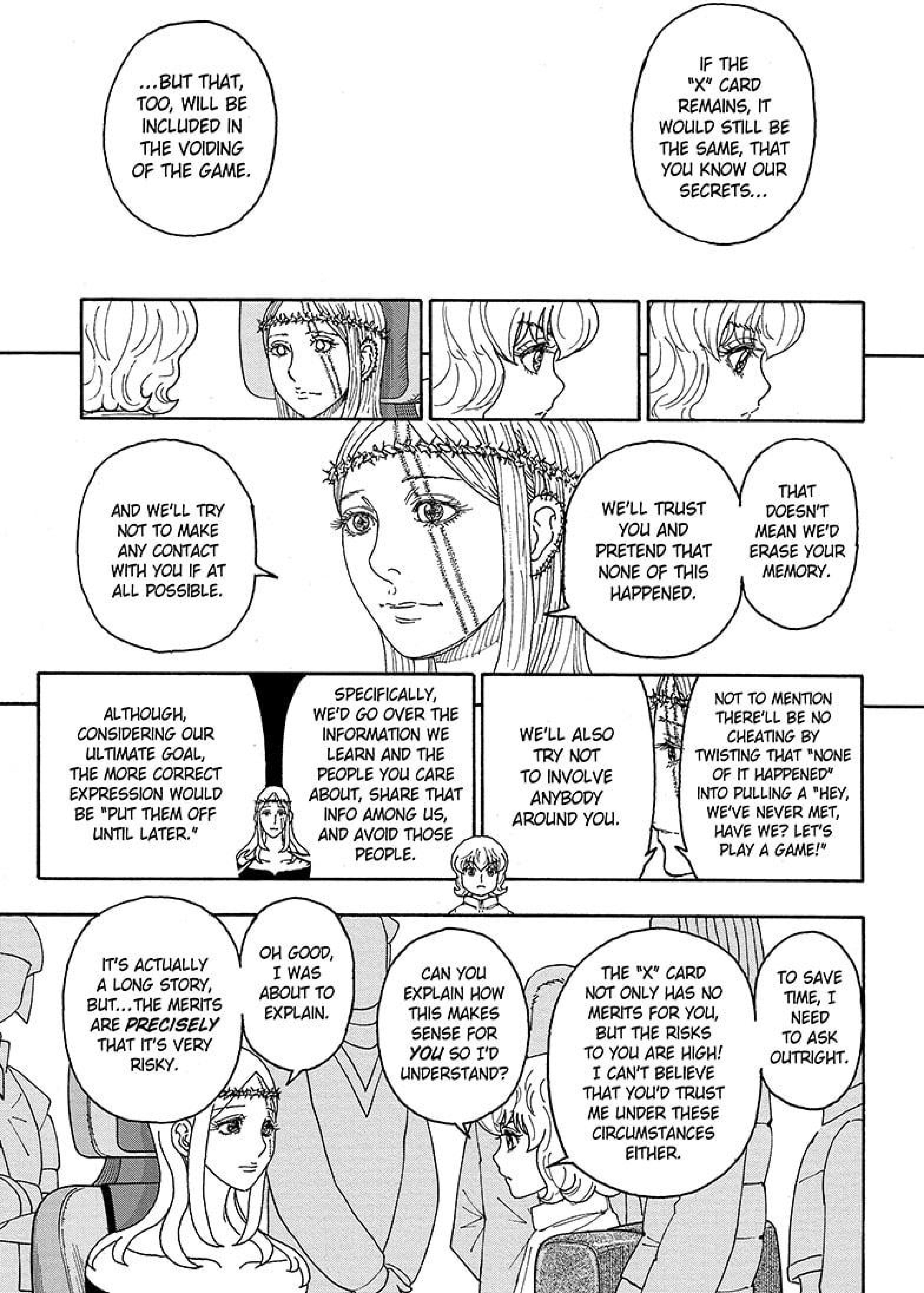

EVEN NOW, HE'S SEARCHING FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU—SPECIALISTS BEFORE THEY KNOW NEN.
SPECIALIST 0.033%
ONJURER 15%
ENHA 27%
NIPULATOR 15%
EMITTER 24%
TRANSMUTER 19%
IT MAY NOT BE ACCURATE, AS IT'S FROM MY OWN RESEARCH, BUT I THINK THE OCCURRENCE OF SPECIALISTS IS ABOUT ONE IN 3,000 PEOPLE.
SURELY YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT THAT MEANS.
IT'S COMPARATIVELY RARE, TO BE SURE.
BUT THERE COULD VERY WELL BE 50 TO 60 MORE OF THEM ABOARD THIS SHIP.
IT WOULD BE *BEST* IF WE CAN FIND SOMEONE WITH THE "LARGER GOAL" IN COMMON.
ズ VMM ズズ
IT DOESN'T *HAVE* TO BE YOU IN PARTICULAR.
IN FACT, HE'S COME ACROSS A FEW SPECIALISTS WHO KNOW NEN ALREADY.
HE WAS QUITE EXCITED THAT ONE OF THEM WAS A FLOOR MASTER OF THE HEAVENS ARENA, SUPER FAMOUS AMONG THE MMA CROWD.
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN BY YOUR RISK INCREASING THE LONGER THIS TAKES.
THAT'S IT FOR EXPLAINING ABILITIES.
ス SHP
I WANT TO HEAR A BIT MORE ABOUT SPECIALISTS.
SPECIFICALLY ABOUT WHAT KIND OF ABILITY YOU'D HAVE ME ACQUIRE.

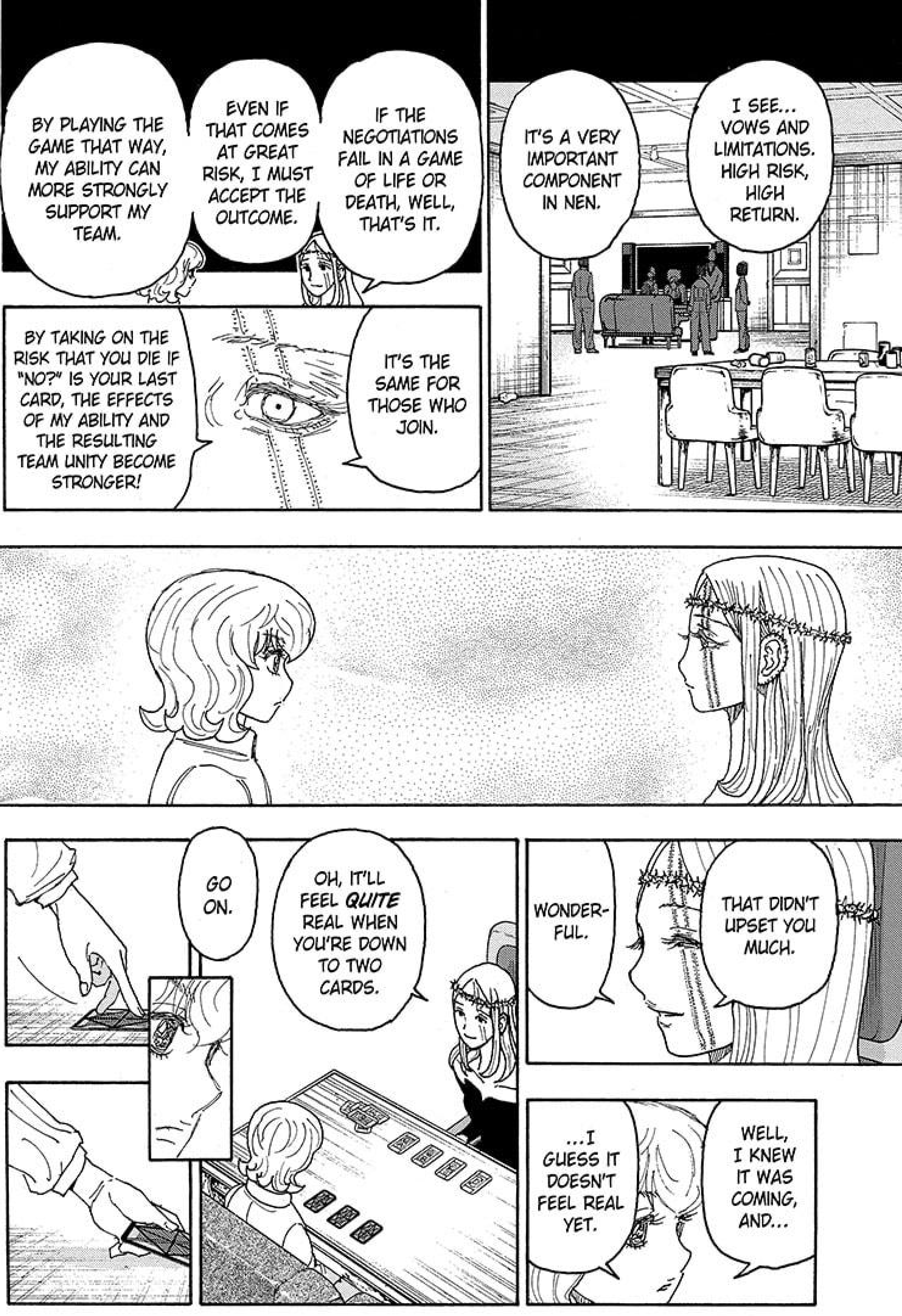

HMM.
THAT'S CLOSELY RELATED TO THE "YES?" AND "NO?" CARDS.
I'LL EXPLAIN ABOUT SPECIALISTS.
PUT VERY SIMPLY, IT'S JUST VERY, VERY USEFUL.
THERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS FOR THE OTHER TYPES. TRANSMUTERS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE A HARD TIME LEARNING MANIPULATIVE ABILITIES, BUT SPECIALISTS HAVE NONE OF THAT. IF THERE WERE ANY NEGATIVES AT ALL, IT'S THAT THEY MIGHT NOT REALIZE THEY'RE SPECIALISTS, FOCUS ON ANOTHER TYPE, AND REGRET IT LATER... THIS CAN AND DOES HAPPEN.
TR
MA
EM
CO
HUP
HUP
EN
SP
SO IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE BEFOREHAND, YOU CAN TRY LEARNING A REALLY UNIQUE ABILITY THAT DOESN'T BELONG TO ANY TYPE, OR A HYBRID ABILITY THAT WOULD USUALLY REQUIRE TRAINING IN MULTIPLE TYPES TO AN ADVANCED LEVEL.
AS A SIDE NOTE, I'M ALSO A SPECIALIST.
MY ABILITY IS QUITE UNIQUE—JOIN ME, AND LEARNING AND IMPROVING NEN ABILITIES BASED ON POINTS. HOW CONVENIENT! AN ADVANCED HYBRID OF ALL FIVE TYPES, IT SEEMS.
SO OF COURSE I HAVE A SPECIFIC REQUEST PERTAINING TO YOUR ABILITY.
BUT THAT'S MORE FOR THIS CARD OVER HERE, SO I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING ELSE. I'M SORRY.
Yes
IF YOU PICK THE "YES?" CARD, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT KIND OF ABILITY I'D WANT YOU TO LEARN IF YOU CHOOSE TO JOIN US.
IT'S PART OF THE DISCUSSION OF WHAT ROLE YOU'D BE EXPECTED TO HAVE ONCE YOU JOIN OUR TEAM, RATHER THAN A QUESTION ON NEN ABILITIES.

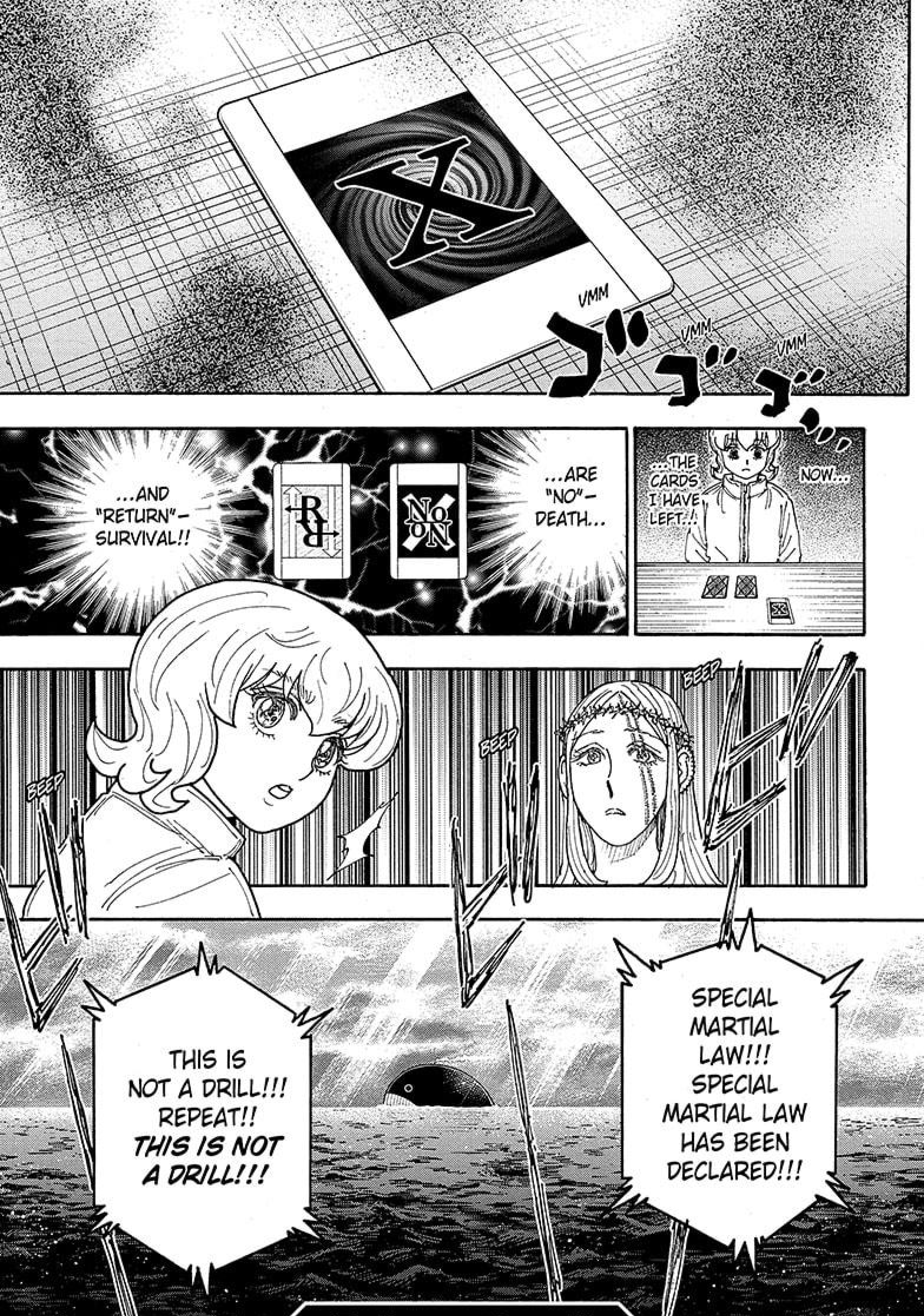

GOT IT?
YES.
SHF
SHF
NO MATTER WHICH CARD I PICK NEXT FROM THE FOUR REMAINING...
...IT DOESN'T CHANGE MY NUMBER OF OPTIONS.
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'D STILL ANSWER QUESTIONS A BIT ON CARDS, EVEN AFTER THEY GET SENT TO THE GRAVEYARD, BESIDES THE QUESTION A CARD...
THE MORE INFORMATION I HAVE, THE BETTER... BUT THE TIME RISK SHE MENTIONED ALSO COMES INTO PLAY... WHETHER I PROLONG THIS GAME OR NOT CAN BE DECIDED ONCE MY OPTIONS BECOME LIMITED.
SLS
Yes
Yes


OH DEAR, THAT'S TOO BAD.
THE SECOND CARD, AND YOU'RE ALREADY NOT JOINING US?
THE OTHERS ARE ALSO DISAPPOINTED... THIS TELLS ME, AT LEAST, THAT THEY HAVEN'T WITNESSED ANY CHEATING IN THE PAST!
BUT DON'T BE OPTIMISTIC.
HAVE THEY EVEN PLAYED THIS GAME BEFORE WITH SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WANT TO JOIN THEM?! IF I'M THE FIRST, OF COURSE THEY'D REACT THAT WAY!
OH WELL... I'LL DO MY BEST UNTIL THE VERY END.
"NO?" AND "X" ARE VERY DIFFERENT, AFTER ALL.
DO YOU...
...WANT TO KNOW HOW?
WELL...
SURE, I'LL OBLIGE.
I'LL PICK THE "NO?" CARD.
No?
OKAY.
I'LL EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENS IF THE "NO?" CARD IS THE LAST TO REMAIN.

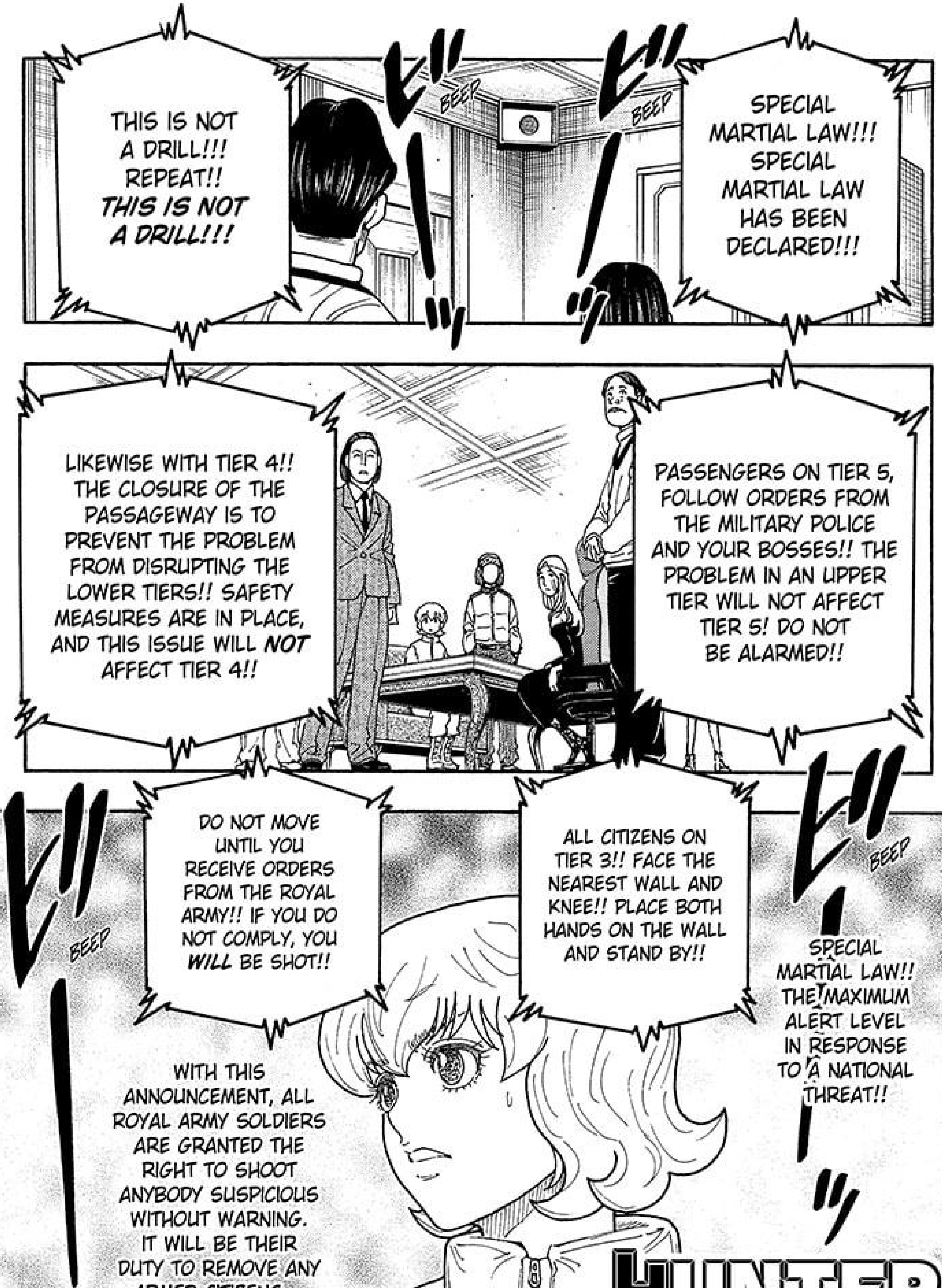

THE ESSENTIAL PART IS THE DIFFERENCE.
"NO?" MEANS YOU WON'T JOIN US.
WHEREAS "X" VOIDS THE GAME ITSELF.
WE CONSIDER "NO?" AS A FIRM EXPRESSION OF YOUR WILL.
No?
A COMPLETE AND IRREVOCABLE REJECTION.
HERE IT COMES... "YES?" AND "NO?" ARE BASICALLY THE SAME.
THIS IS THE TIME TO PERSUADE/ THREATEN ME UNTIL I THINK YES IS THE ONLY OPTION BETWEEN YES AND NO.
I'LL TAKE IT TO MEAN YOU, AND THOSE AROUND YOU, WILL NOT BE "ONE OF US."
YOU'LL BE CLASSIFIED AS "OTHER"...SIMPLY ***POINTS*** FOR US TO ACCRUE IN ORDER TO LEVEL UP, AND TO ATTAIN OUR GOAL.
WE WON'T TRY TO RECRUIT YOU AGAIN. HOWEVER...
...WE CAN'T HAVE YOU LEAVE AFTER YOU KNOW OUR SECRETS.
AND ***THERE*** IT IS.
DOESN'T THAT BASICALLY MEAN EVEN THE "X" CARD IS POINTLESS?
THE THIRD TRAP...
...THAT THIS GAME ITSELF IS ALL A TRAP... TO MAKE ME SAY "YES"!!
QB
D
Yes?


IF THE "X" CARD REMAINS, IT WOULD STILL BE THE SAME, THAT YOU KNOW OUR SECRETS...
...BUT THAT, TOO, WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE VOIDING OF THE GAME.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'D ERASE YOUR MEMORY.
WE'LL TRUST YOU AND PRETEND THAT NONE OF THIS HAPPENED.
AND WE'LL TRY NOT TO MAKE ANY CONTACT WITH YOU IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.
NOT TO MENTION THERE'LL BE NO CHEATING BY TWISTING THAT "NONE OF IT HAPPENED" INTO PULLING A "HEY, WE'VE NEVER MET, HAVE WE? LET'S PLAY A GAME!"
WE'LL ALSO TRY NOT TO INVOLVE ANYBODY AROUND YOU.
SPECIFICALLY, WE'D GO OVER THE INFORMATION WE LEARN AND THE PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT, SHARE THAT INFO AMONG US, AND AVOID THOSE PEOPLE.
ALTHOUGH, CONSIDERING OUR ULTIMATE GOAL, THE MORE CORRECT EXPRESSION WOULD BE "PUT THEM OFF UNTIL LATER."
TO SAVE TIME, I NEED TO ASK OUTRIGHT.
THE "X" CARD NOT ONLY HAS NO MERITS FOR YOU, BUT THE RISKS TO YOU ARE HIGH! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU'D TRUST ME UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES EITHER.
CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW THIS MAKES SENSE FOR *YOU* SO I'D UNDERSTAND?
OH GOOD, I WAS ABOUT TO EXPLAIN.
IT'S ACTUALLY A LONG STORY, BUT...THE MERITS ARE *PRECISELY* THAT IT'S VERY RISKY.


I SEE... VOWS AND LIMITATIONS. HIGH RISK, HIGH RETURN.
IT'S A VERY IMPORTANT COMPONENT IN NEN.
IF THE NEGOTIATIONS FAIL IN A GAME OF LIFE OR DEATH, WELL, THAT'S IT.
EVEN IF THAT COMES AT GREAT RISK, I MUST ACCEPT THE OUTCOME.
BY PLAYING THE GAME THAT WAY, MY ABILITY CAN MORE STRONGLY SUPPORT MY TEAM.
IT'S THE SAME FOR THOSE WHO JOIN.
BY TAKING ON THE RISK THAT YOU DIE IF "NO?" IS YOUR LAST CARD, THE EFFECTS OF MY ABILITY AND THE RESULTING TEAM UNITY BECOME STRONGER!
THAT DIDN'T UPSET YOU MUCH.
WONDERFUL.
WELL, I KNEW IT WAS COMING, AND...
...I GUESS IT DOESN'T FEEL REAL YET.
OH, IT'LL FEEL *QUITE* REAL WHEN YOU'RE DOWN TO TWO CARDS.
GO ON.

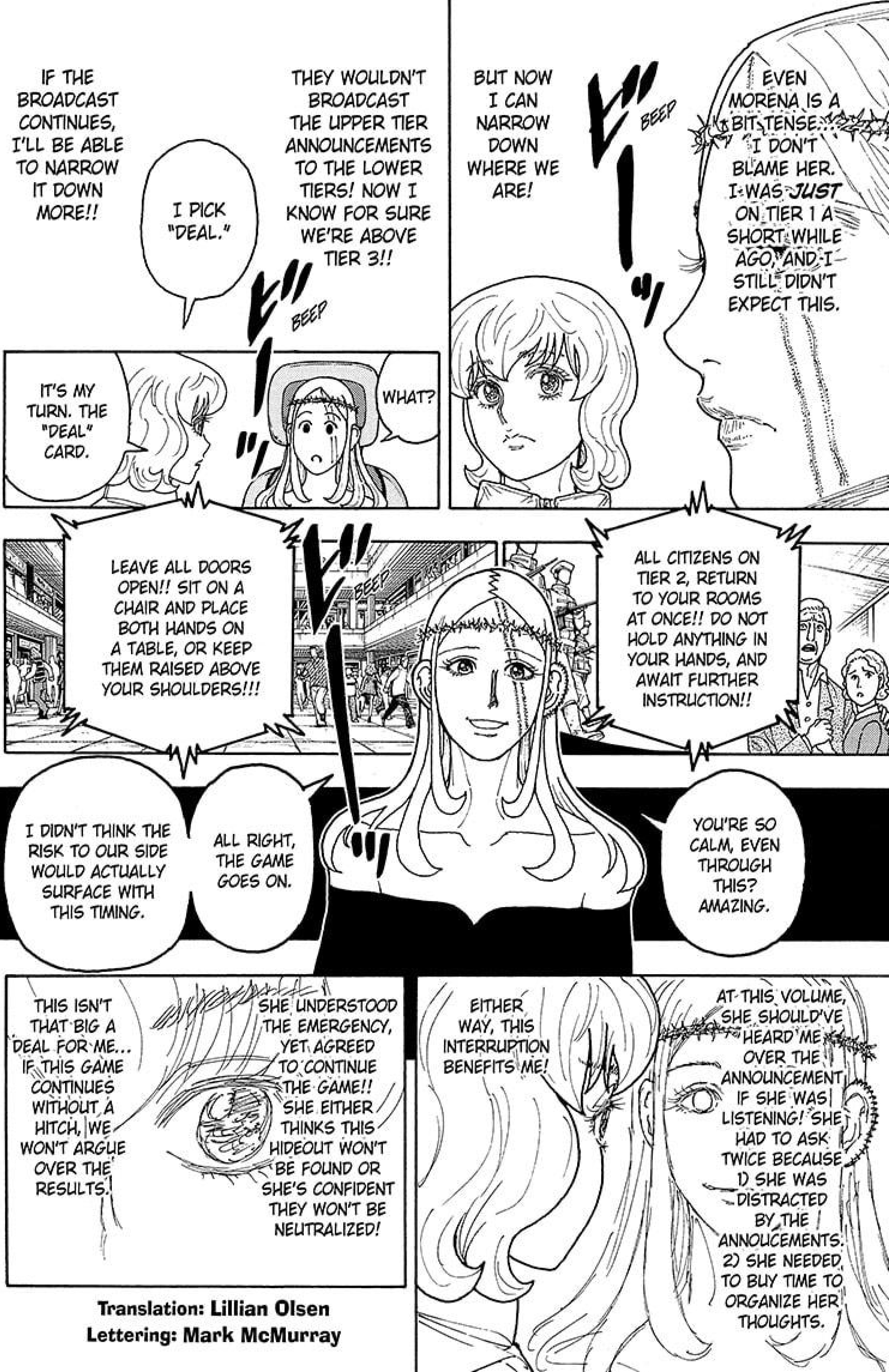

VMM
VMM
VMM
NOW...
...THE CARDS I HAVE LEFT...
...ARE "NO"—DEATH...
...AND "RETURN"—SURVIVAL!!
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW!!! SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW HAS BEEN DECLARED!!!
THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!! REPEAT!! *THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!!*

To be continued!

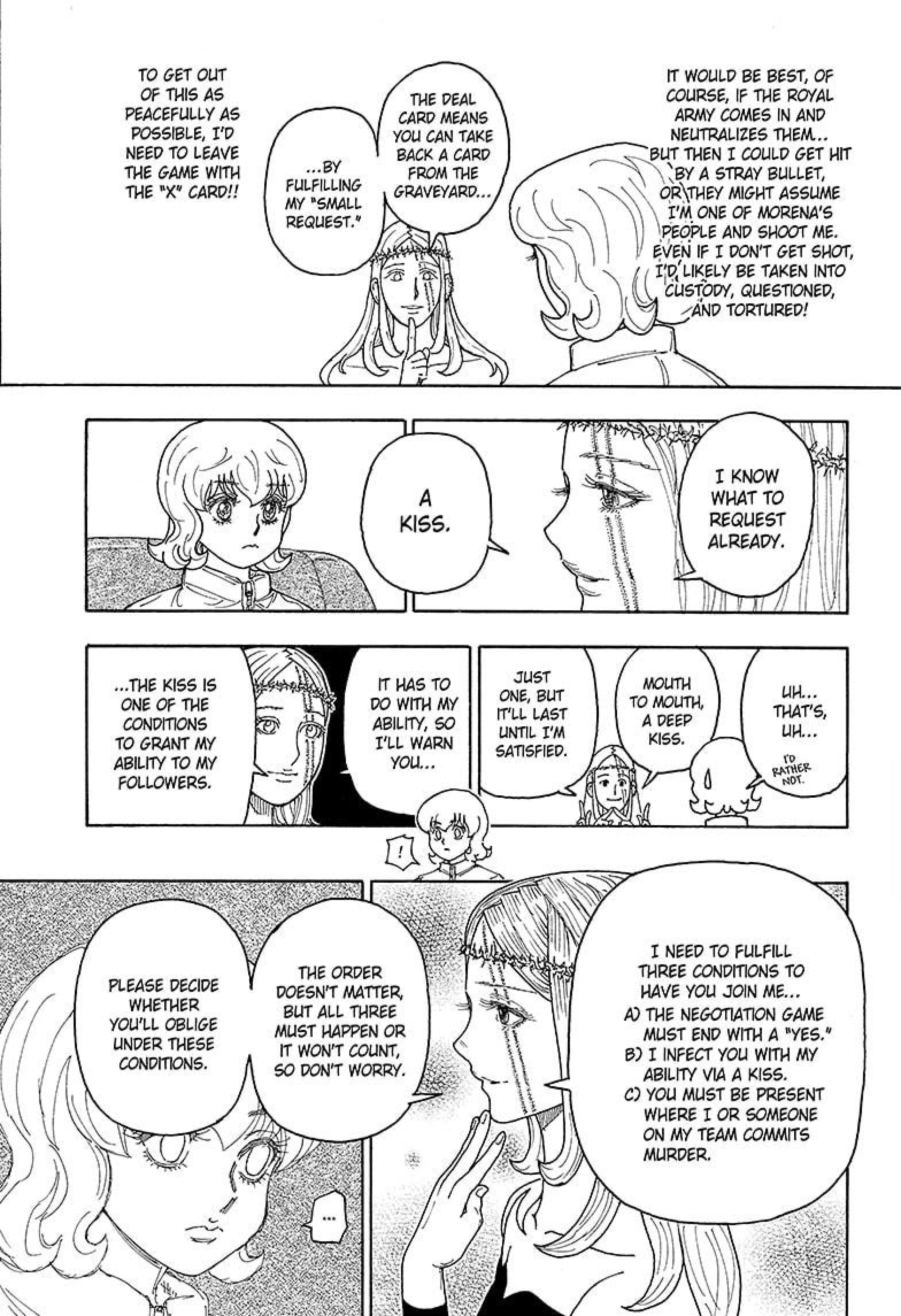

ビー BEEP
SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW!!! SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW HAS BEEN DECLARED!!!
ビー BEEP
THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!! REPEAT!! *THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!!*
PASSENGERS ON TIER 5, FOLLOW ORDERS FROM THE MILITARY POLICE AND YOUR BOSSES!! THE PROBLEM IN AN UPPER TIER WILL NOT AFFECT TIER 5! DO NOT BE ALARMED!!
LIKEWISE WITH TIER 4!! THE CLOSURE OF THE PASSAGEWAY IS TO PREVENT THE PROBLEM FROM DISRUPTING THE LOWER TIERS!! SAFETY MEASURES ARE IN PLACE, AND THIS ISSUE WILL ***NOT*** AFFECT TIER 4!!
ビー BEEP
SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW!! THE MAXIMUM ALERT LEVEL IN RESPONSE TO A NATIONAL THREAT!!
ALL CITIZENS ON TIER 3!! FACE THE NEAREST WALL AND KNEE!! PLACE BOTH HANDS ON THE WALL AND STAND BY!!
DO NOT MOVE UNTIL YOU RECEIVE ORDERS FROM THE ROYAL ARMY!! IF YOU DO NOT COMPLY, YOU ***WILL*** BE SHOT!!
ビー BEEP
WITH THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, ALL ROYAL ARMY SOLDIERS ARE GRANTED THE RIGHT TO SHOOT ANYBODY SUSPICIOUS WITHOUT WARNING. IT WILL BE THEIR DUTY TO REMOVE ANY ARMED CITIZENS— AND ELIMINATE SUBVERSIVES!!
HUNTER×HUNTER
ハンター ハンター

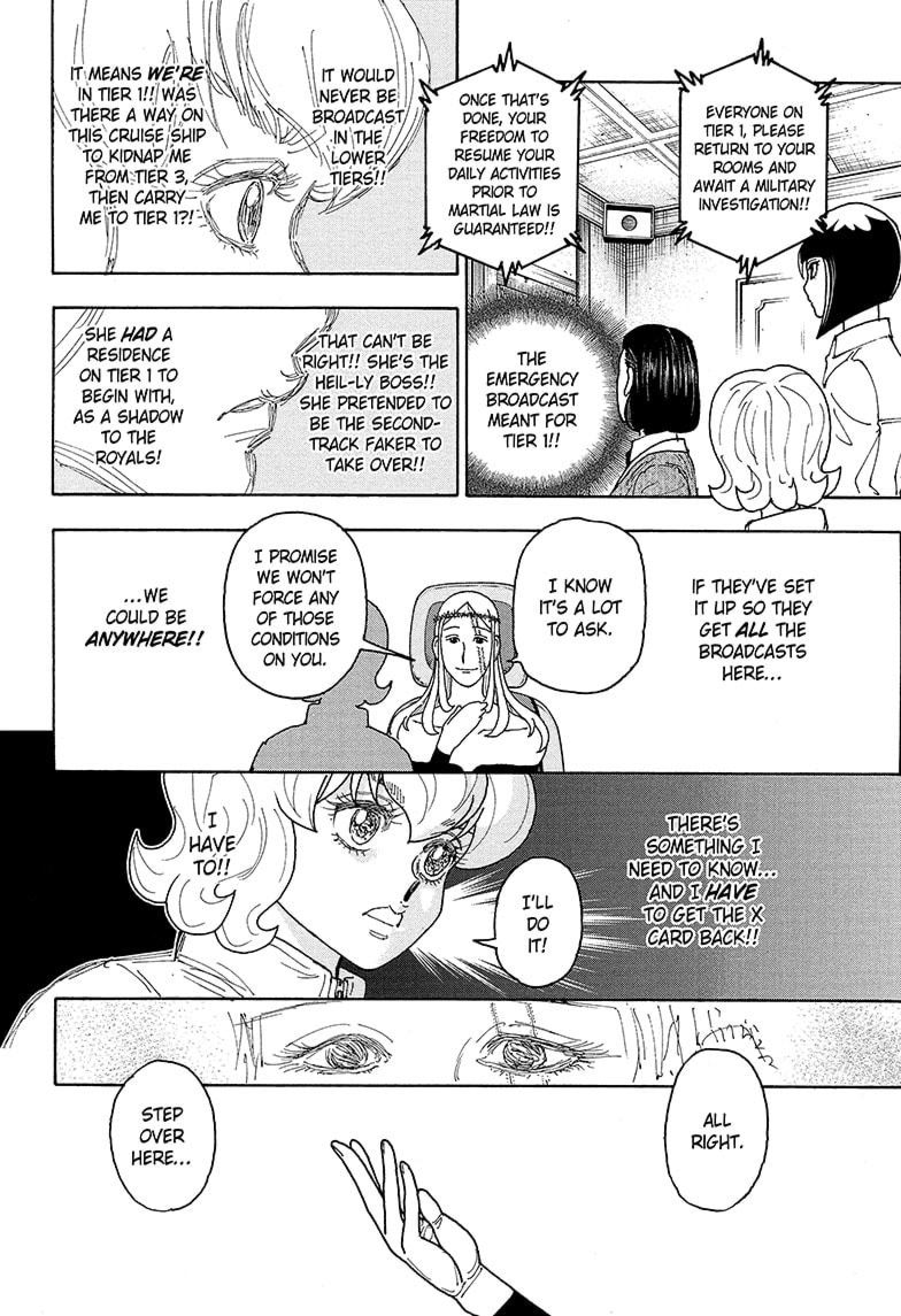
No. 409: Negotiation: Part 3

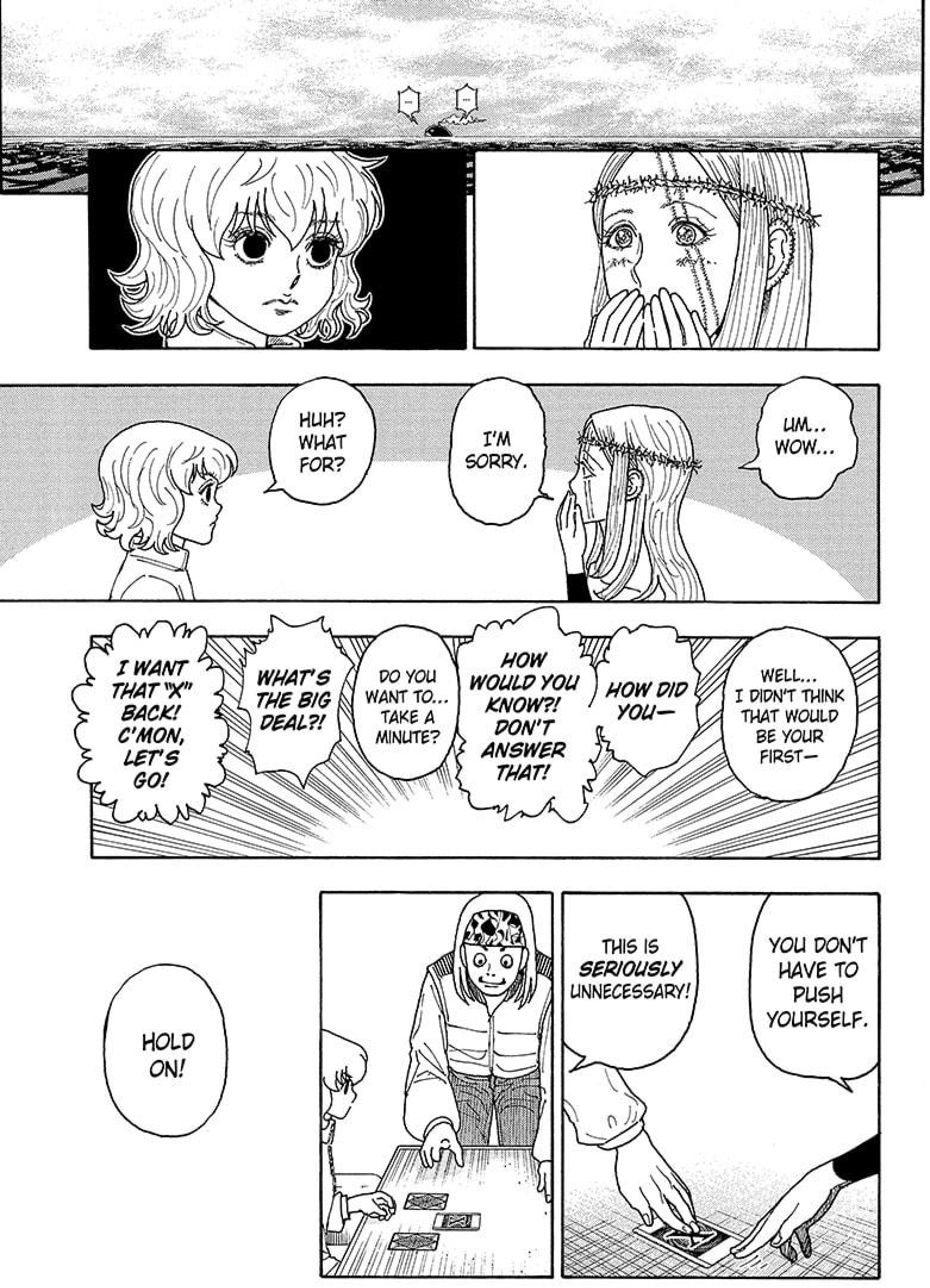
By Yoshihiro Togashi

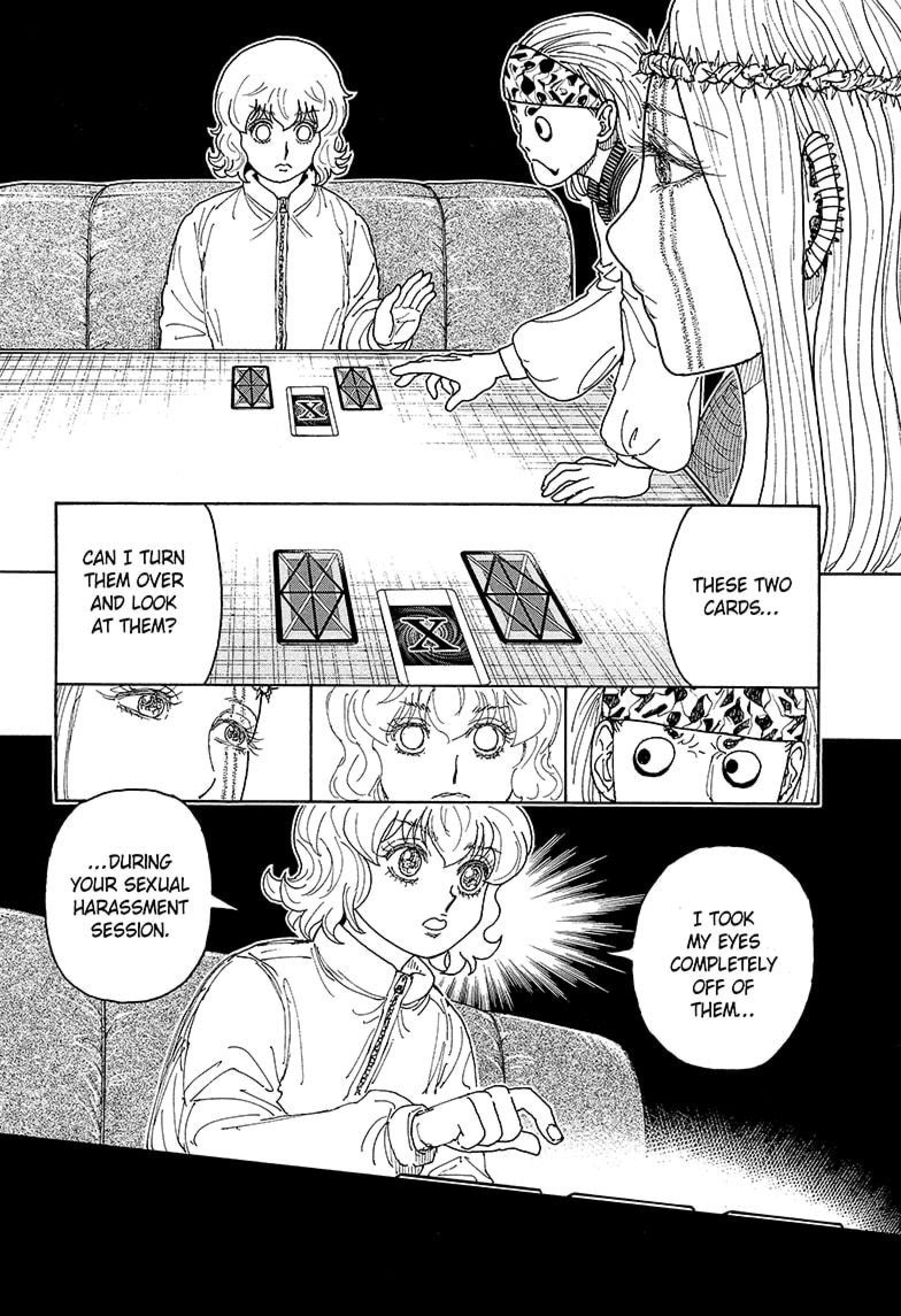

EVEN MORENA IS A BIT TENSE... I DON'T BLAME HER. I WAS *JUST* ON TIER 1 A SHORT WHILE AGO, AND I STILL DIDN'T EXPECT THIS.
BEEP
BUT NOW I CAN NARROW DOWN WHERE WE ARE!
THEY WOULDN'T BROADCAST THE UPPER TIER ANNOUNCEMENTS TO THE LOWER TIERS! NOW I KNOW FOR SURE WE'RE ABOVE TIER 3!!
I PICK "DEAL."
IF THE BROADCAST CONTINUES, I'LL BE ABLE TO NARROW IT DOWN MORE!!
BEEP
WHAT?
IT'S MY TURN. THE "DEAL" CARD.
ALL CITIZENS ON TIER 2, RETURN TO YOUR ROOMS AT ONCE!! DO NOT HOLD ANYTHING IN YOUR HANDS, AND AWAIT FURTHER INSTRUCTION!!
BEEP
LEAVE ALL DOORS OPEN!! SIT ON A CHAIR AND PLACE BOTH HANDS ON A TABLE, OR KEEP THEM RAISED ABOVE YOUR SHOULDERS!!!
YOU'RE SO CALM, EVEN THROUGH THIS? AMAZING.
ALL RIGHT, THE GAME GOES ON.
I DIDN'T THINK THE RISK TO OUR SIDE WOULD ACTUALLY SURFACE WITH THIS TIMING.
AT THIS VOLUME, SHE SHOULD'VE HEARD ME OVER THE ANNOUNCEMENT IF SHE WAS LISTENING! SHE HAD TO ASK TWICE BECAUSE 1) SHE WAS DISTRACTED BY THE ANNOUCEMENTS. 2) SHE NEEDED TO BUY TIME TO ORGANIZE HER THOUGHTS.
EITHER WAY, THIS INTERRUPTION BENEFITS ME!
SHE UNDERSTOOD THE EMERGENCY, YET AGREED TO CONTINUE THE GAME!! SHE EITHER THINKS THIS HIDEOUT WON'T BE FOUND OR SHE'S CONFIDENT THEY WON'T BE NEUTRALIZED!
THIS ISN'T THAT BIG A DEAL FOR ME... IF THIS GAME CONTINUES WITHOUT A HITCH, WE WON'T ARGUE OVER THE RESULTS.

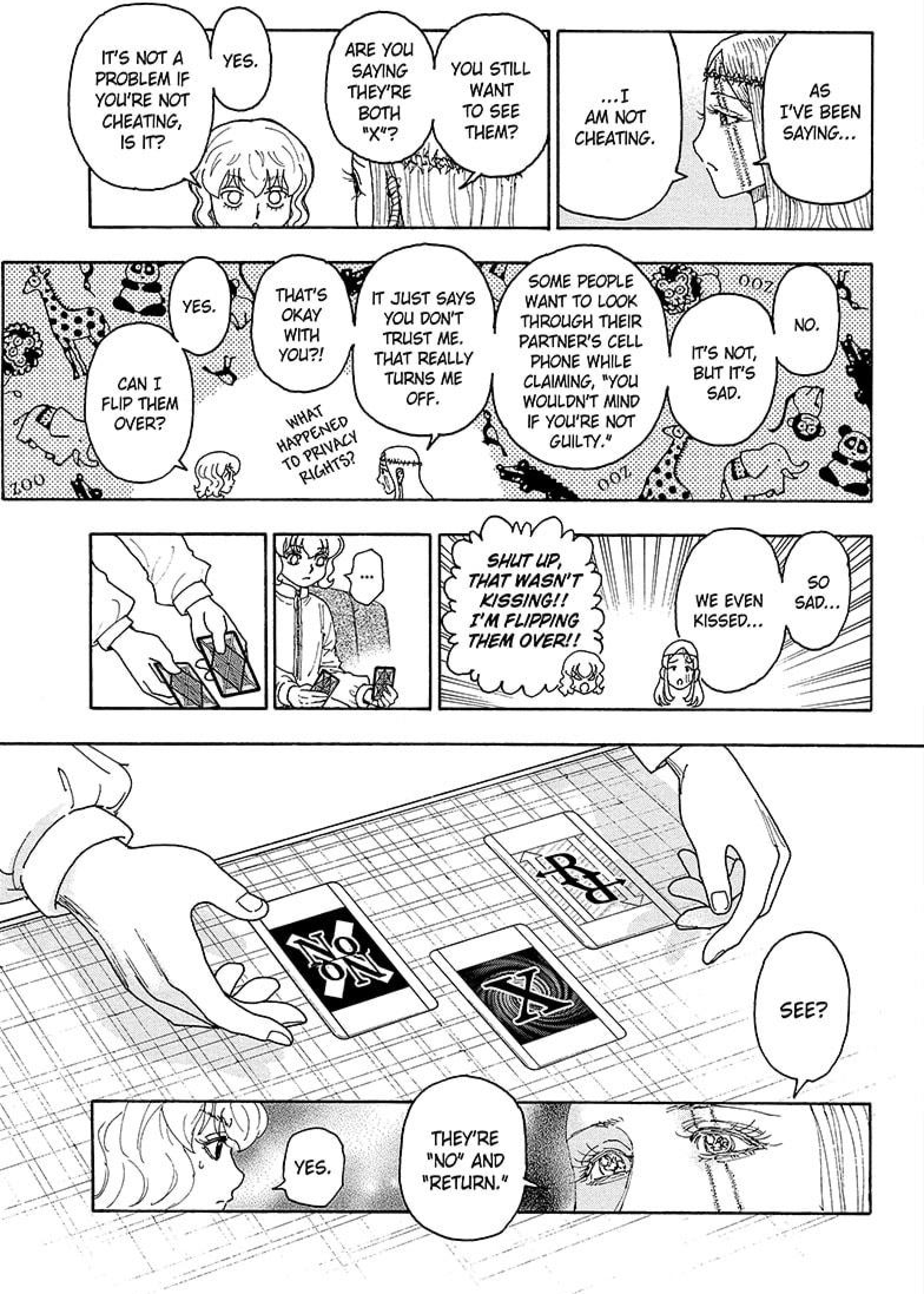
Translation: Lillian Olsen
Lettering: Mark McMurray

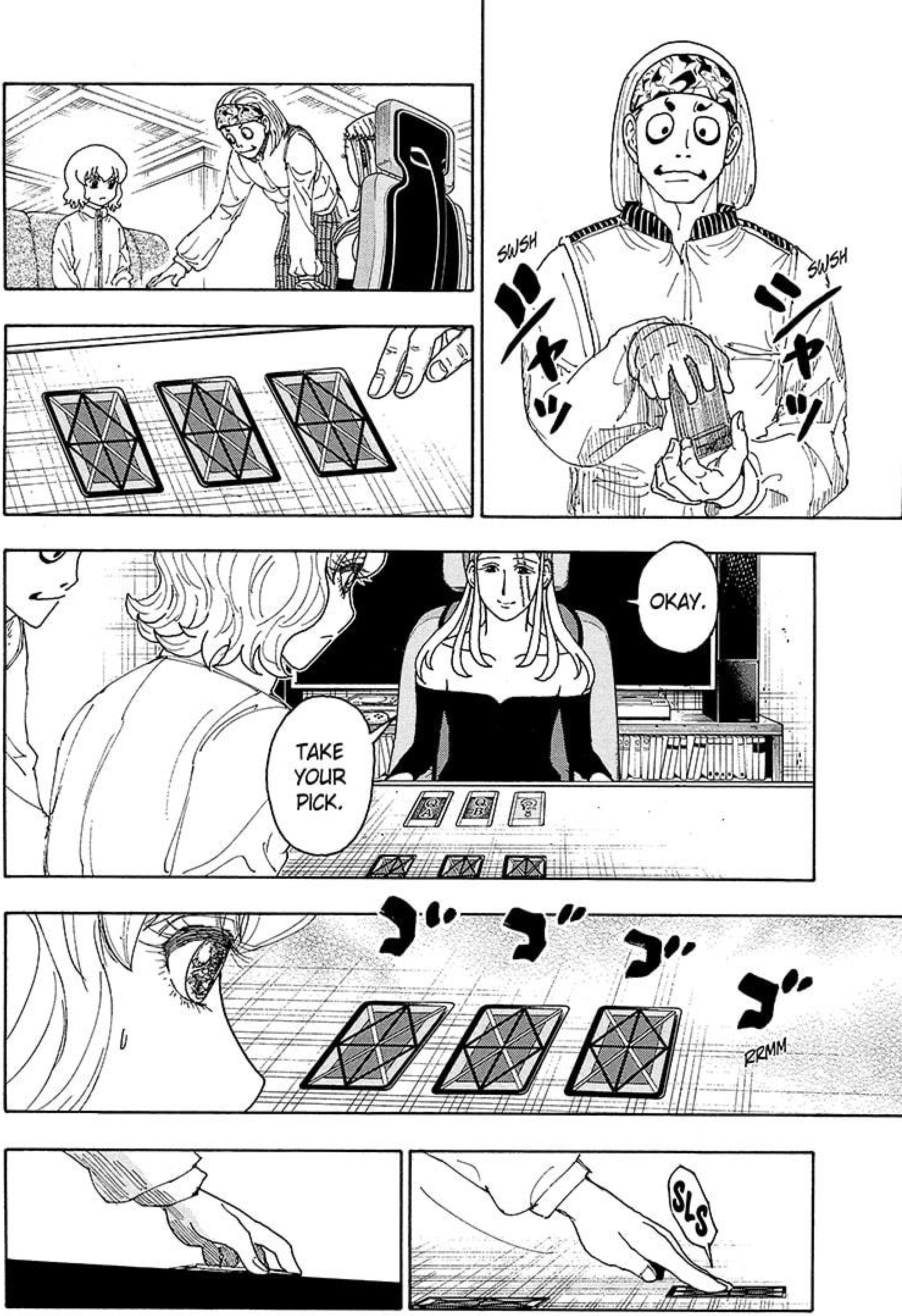

IT WOULD BE BEST, OF COURSE, IF THE ROYAL ARMY COMES IN AND NEUTRALIZES THEM.. BUT THEN I COULD GET HIT BY A STRAY BULLET, OR THEY MIGHT ASSUME I'M ONE OF MORENA'S PEOPLE AND SHOOT ME. EVEN IF I DON'T GET SHOT, I'D LIKELY BE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, QUESTIONED, AND TORTURED!
THE DEAL CARD MEANS YOU CAN TAKE BACK A CARD FROM THE GRAVEYARD...
...BY FULFILLING MY "SMALL REQUEST."
TO GET OUT OF THIS AS PEACEFULLY AS POSSIBLE, I'D NEED TO LEAVE THE GAME WITH THE "X" CARD!!
I KNOW WHAT TO REQUEST ALREADY.
A KISS.
UH... THAT'S, UH...
I'D RATHER NOT.
MOUTH TO MOUTH, A DEEP KISS.
JUST ONE, BUT IT'LL LAST UNTIL I'M SATISFIED.
IT HAS TO DO WITH MY ABILITY, SO I'LL WARN YOU...
...THE KISS IS ONE OF THE CONDITIONS TO GRANT MY ABILITY TO MY FOLLOWERS.
!
I NEED TO FULFILL THREE CONDITIONS TO HAVE YOU JOIN ME... A) THE NEGOTIATION GAME MUST END WITH A "YES." B) I INFECT YOU WITH MY ABILITY VIA A KISS. C) YOU MUST BE PRESENT WHERE I OR SOMEONE ON MY TEAM COMMITS MURDER.
THE ORDER DOESN'T MATTER, BUT ALL THREE MUST HAPPEN OR IT WON'T COUNT, SO DON'T WORRY.
PLEASE DECIDE WHETHER YOU'LL OBLIGE UNDER THESE CONDITIONS.
...

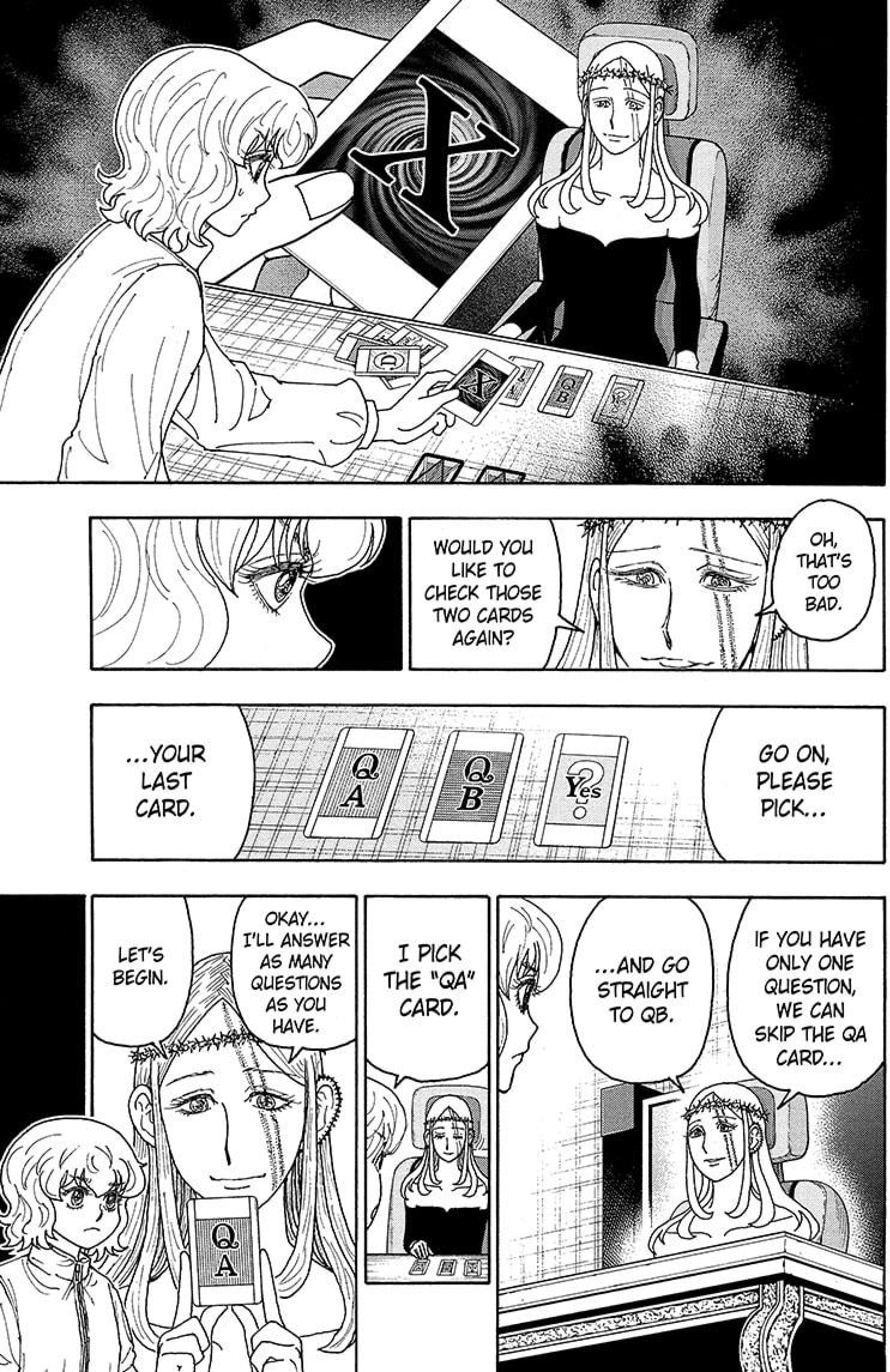

EVERYONE ON TIER 1, PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR ROOMS AND AWAIT A MILITARY INVESTIGATION!!
ONCE THAT'S DONE, YOUR FREEDOM TO RESUME YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO MARTIAL LAW IS GUARANTEED!!
THE EMERGENCY BROADCAST MEANT FOR TIER 1!!
IT WOULD NEVER BE BROADCAST IN THE LOWER TIERS!!
IT MEANS *WE'RE* IN TIER 1!! WAS THERE A WAY ON THIS CRUISE SHIP TO KIDNAP ME FROM TIER 3, THEN CARRY ME TO TIER 1?!
THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT!! SHE'S THE HEIL-LY BOSS!! SHE PRETENDED TO BE THE SECOND-TRACK FAKER TO TAKE OVER!!
SHE *HAD* A RESIDENCE ON TIER 1 TO BEGIN WITH, AS A SHADOW TO THE ROYALS!
IF THEY'VE SET IT UP SO THEY GET *ALL* THE BROADCASTS HERE...
I KNOW IT'S A LOT TO ASK.
I PROMISE WE WON'T FORCE ANY OF THOSE CONDITIONS ON YOU.
...WE COULD BE *ANYWHERE!!*
THERE'S SOMETHING I NEED TO KNOW... AND I *HAVE* TO GET THE X CARD BACK!!
I'LL DO IT!
I HAVE TO!!
ALL RIGHT.
STEP OVER HERE...

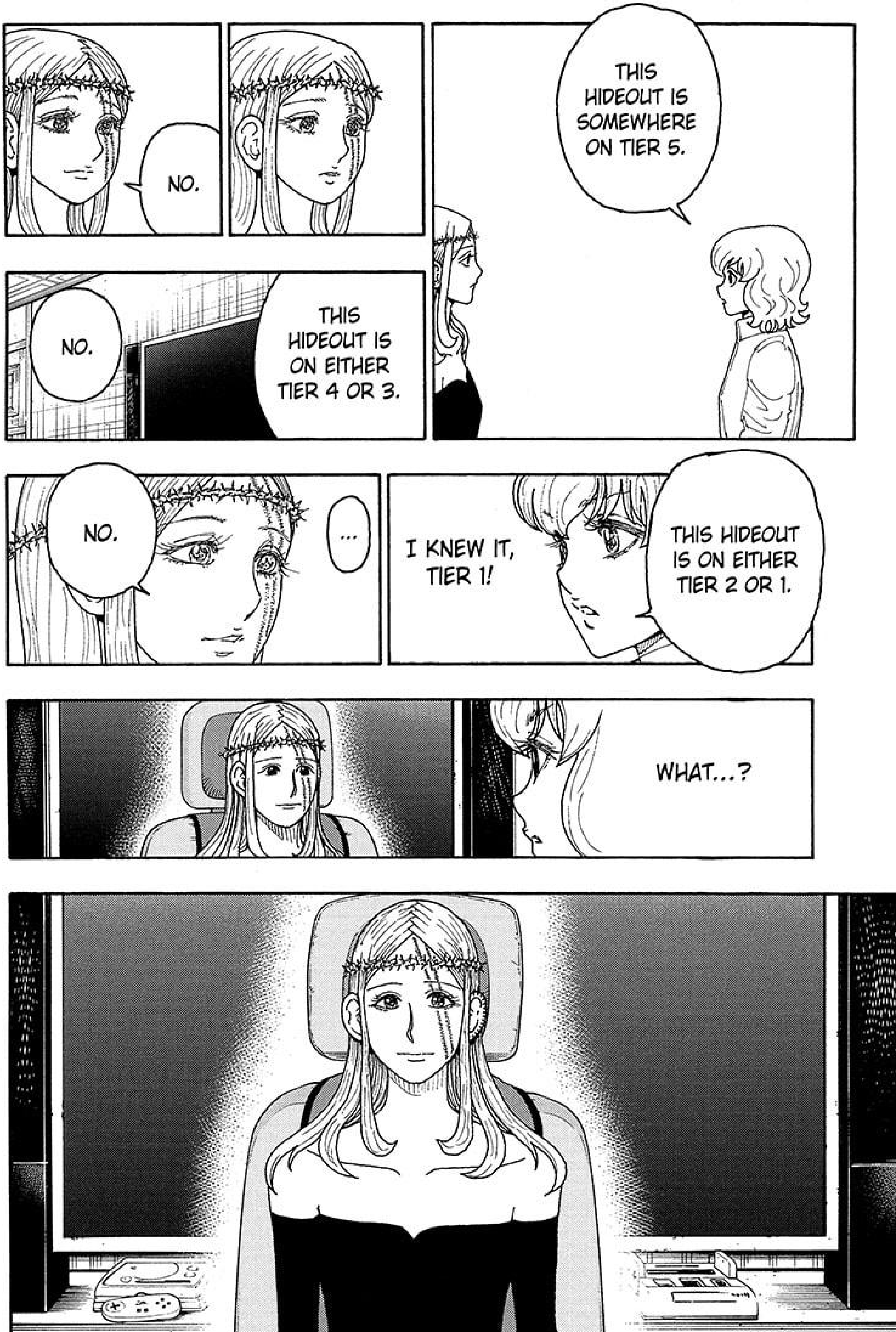

…
…
UM... WOW...
I'M SORRY.
HUH? WHAT FOR?
WELL... I DIDN'T THINK THAT WOULD BE YOUR FIRST—
HOW DID YOU—
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?! DON'T ANSWER THAT!
DO YOU WANT TO... TAKE A MINUTE?
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?!
I WANT THAT "X" BACK! C'MON, LET'S GO!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUSH YOURSELF.
THIS IS SERIOUSLY UNNECESSARY!
HOLD ON!

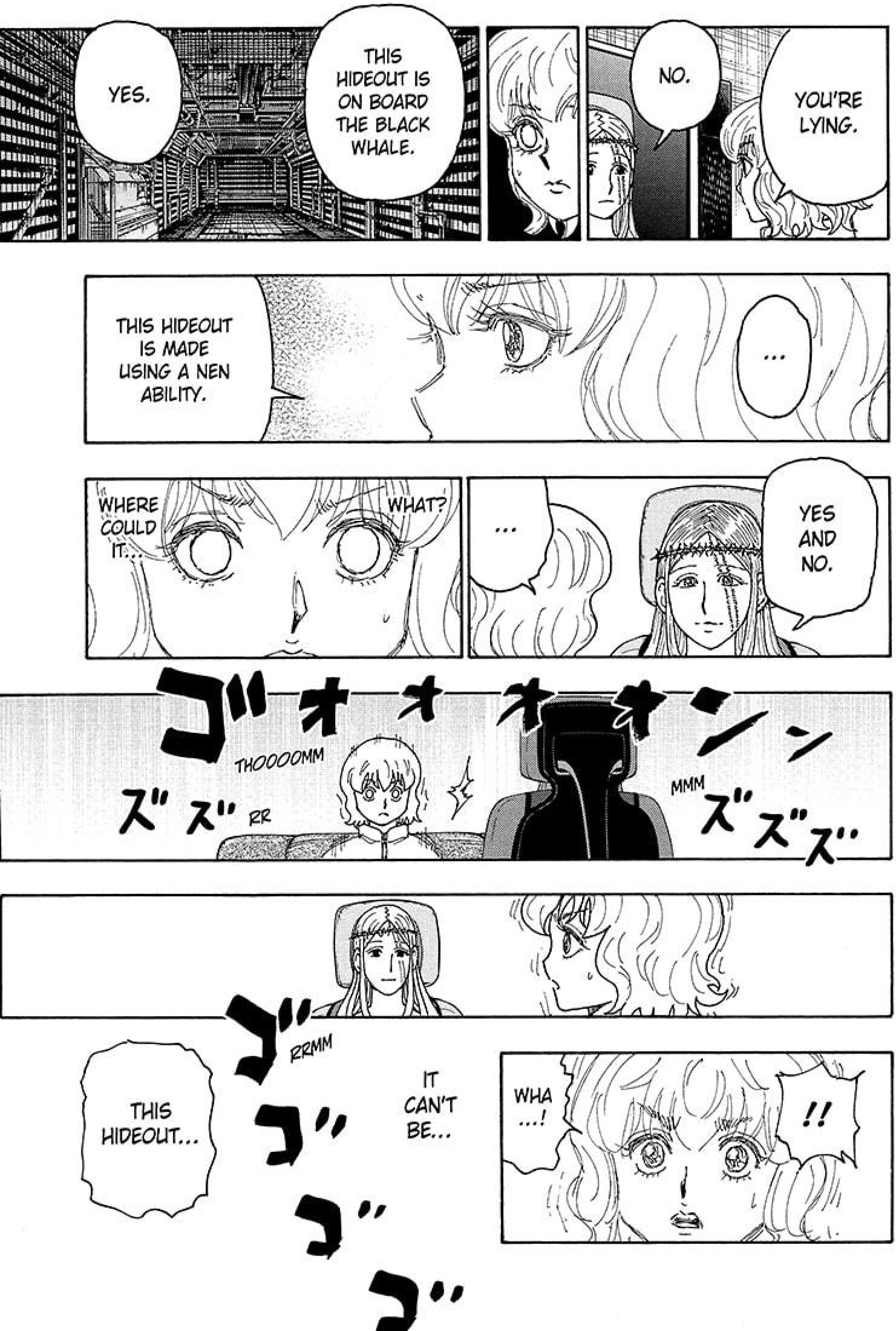

THESE TWO CARDS...
CAN I TURN THEM OVER AND LOOK AT THEM?
I TOOK MY EYES COMPLETELY OFF OF THEM...
...DURING YOUR SEXUAL HARASSMENT SESSION.

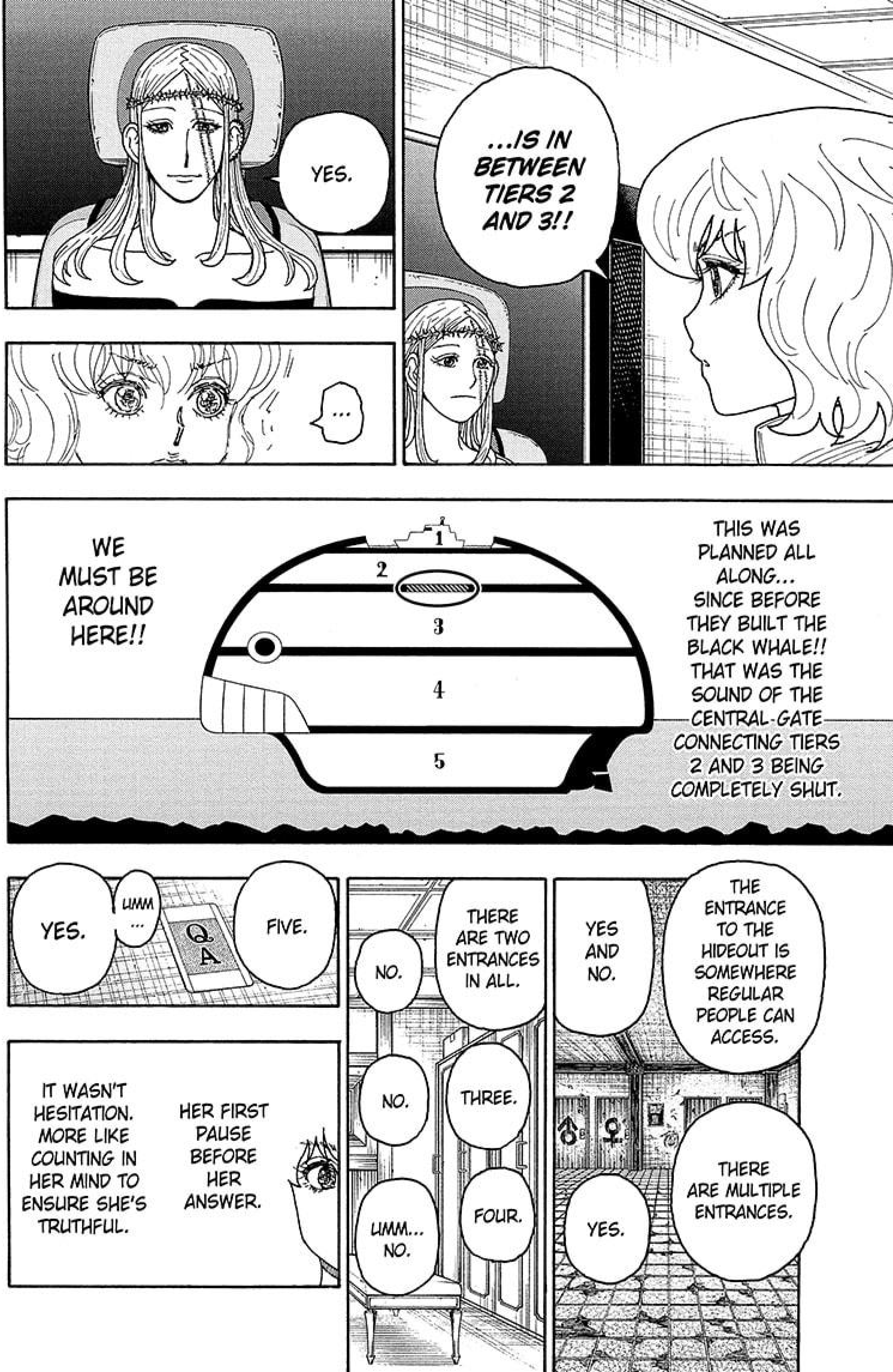

AS I'VE BEEN SAYING...
...I AM NOT CHEATING.
YOU STILL WANT TO SEE THEM?
ARE YOU SAYING THEY'RE BOTH "X"?
YES.
IT'S NOT A PROBLEM IF YOU'RE NOT CHEATING, IS IT?
NO.
IT'S NOT, BUT IT'S SAD.
SOME PEOPLE WANT TO LOOK THROUGH THEIR PARTNER'S CELL PHONE WHILE CLAIMING, "YOU WOULDN'T MIND IF YOU'RE NOT GUILTY."
IT JUST SAYS YOU DON'T TRUST ME. THAT REALLY TURNS ME OFF.
WHAT HAPPENED TO PRIVACY RIGHTS?
THAT'S OKAY WITH YOU?!
YES.
CAN I FLIP THEM OVER?
SO SAD...
WE EVEN KISSED...
SHUT UP, THAT WASN'T KISSING!! I'M FLIPPING THEM OVER!!
...
NO
X
SEE?
THEY'RE "NO" AND "RETURN."
YES.

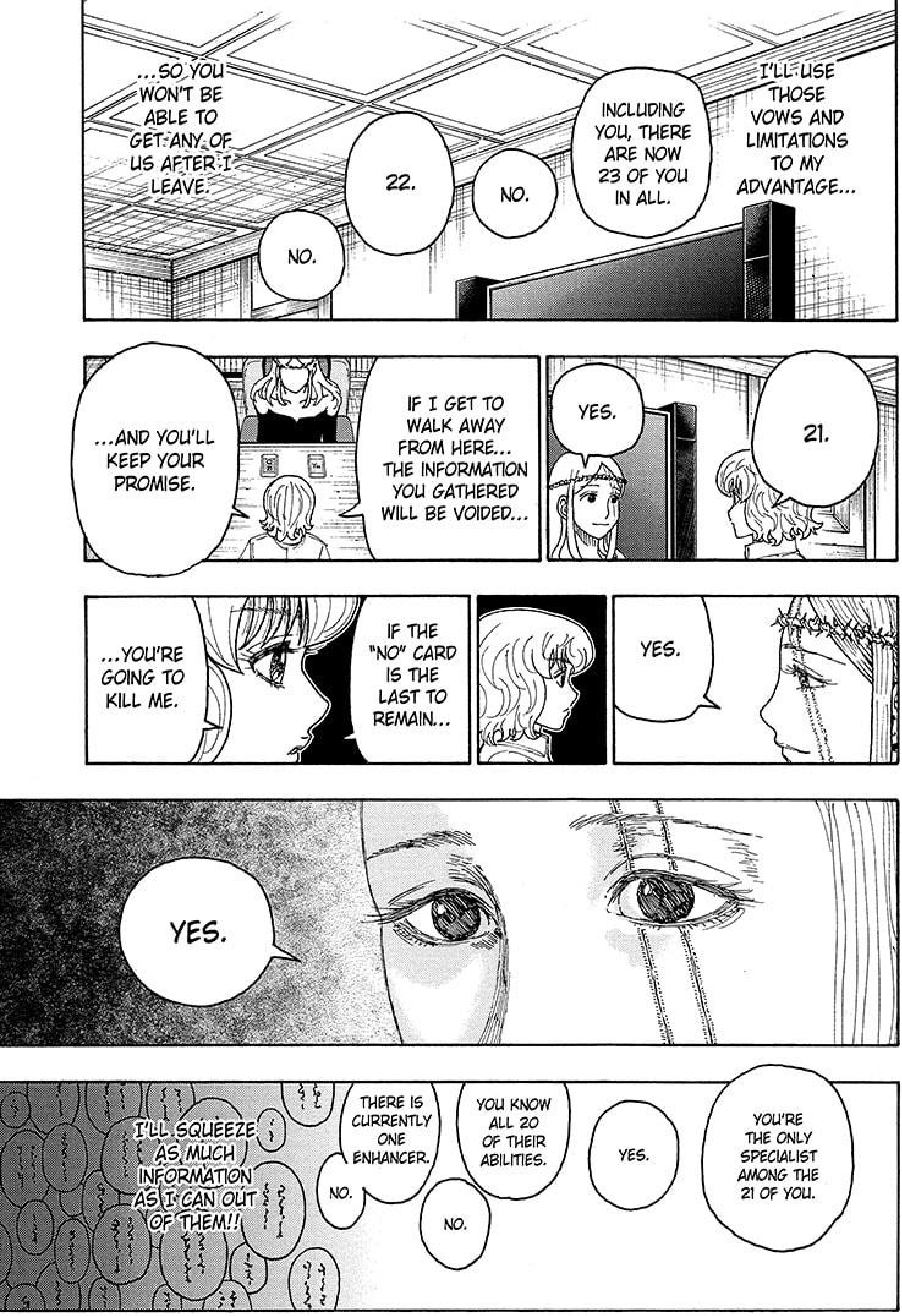

SWSH
ジャッ
SWSH
ジャッ
OKAY.
TAKE YOUR PICK.
ゴゴゴゴ
RRMM
SLS

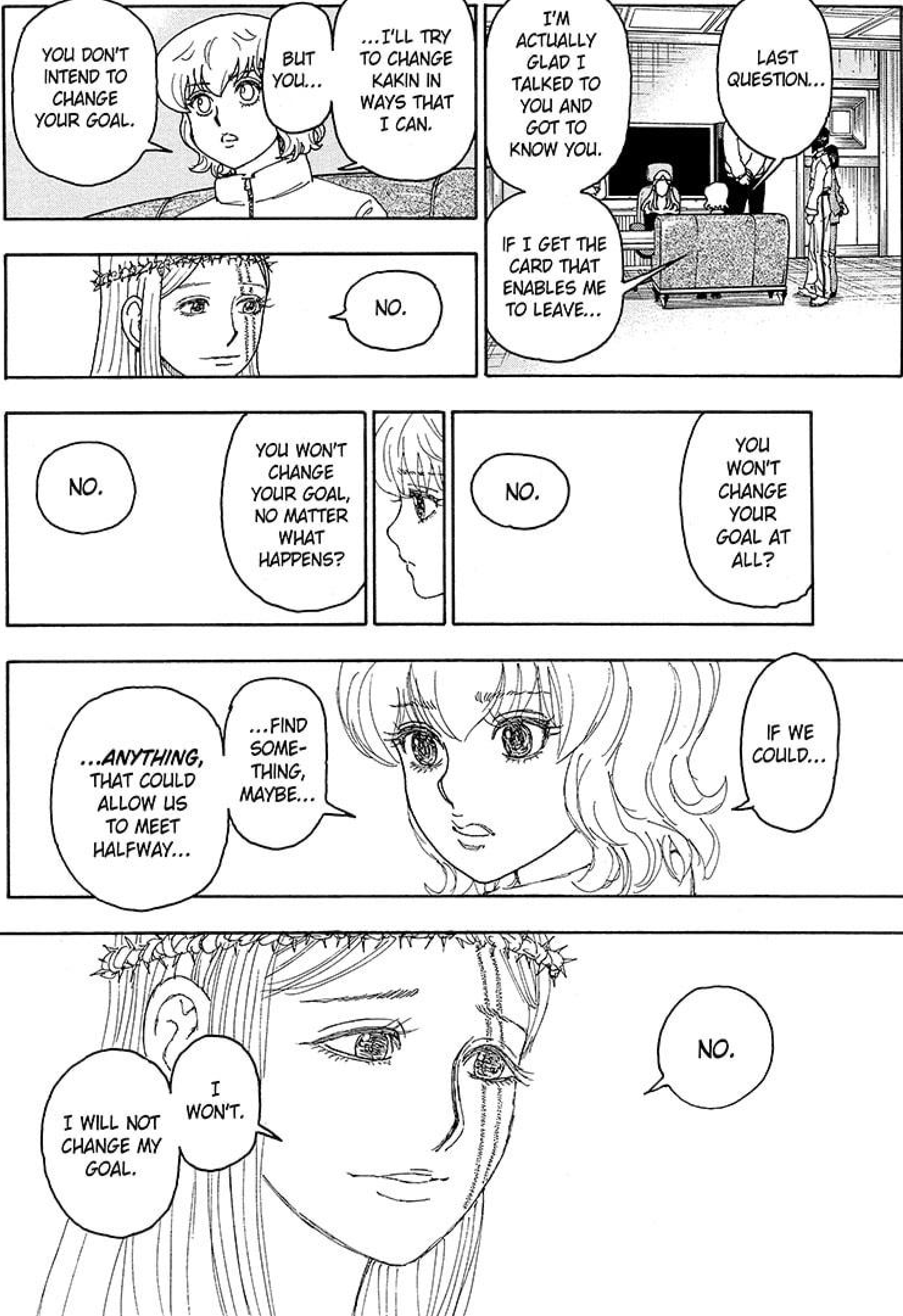

X
OH, THAT'S TOO BAD.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHECK THOSE TWO CARDS AGAIN?
GO ON, PLEASE PICK...
? Yes
Q B
Q A
...YOUR LAST CARD.
IF YOU HAVE ONLY ONE QUESTION, WE CAN SKIP THE QA CARD...
...AND GO STRAIGHT TO QB.
I PICK THE "QA" CARD.
OKAY... I'LL ANSWER AS MANY QUESTIONS AS YOU HAVE.
LET'S BEGIN.
Q A

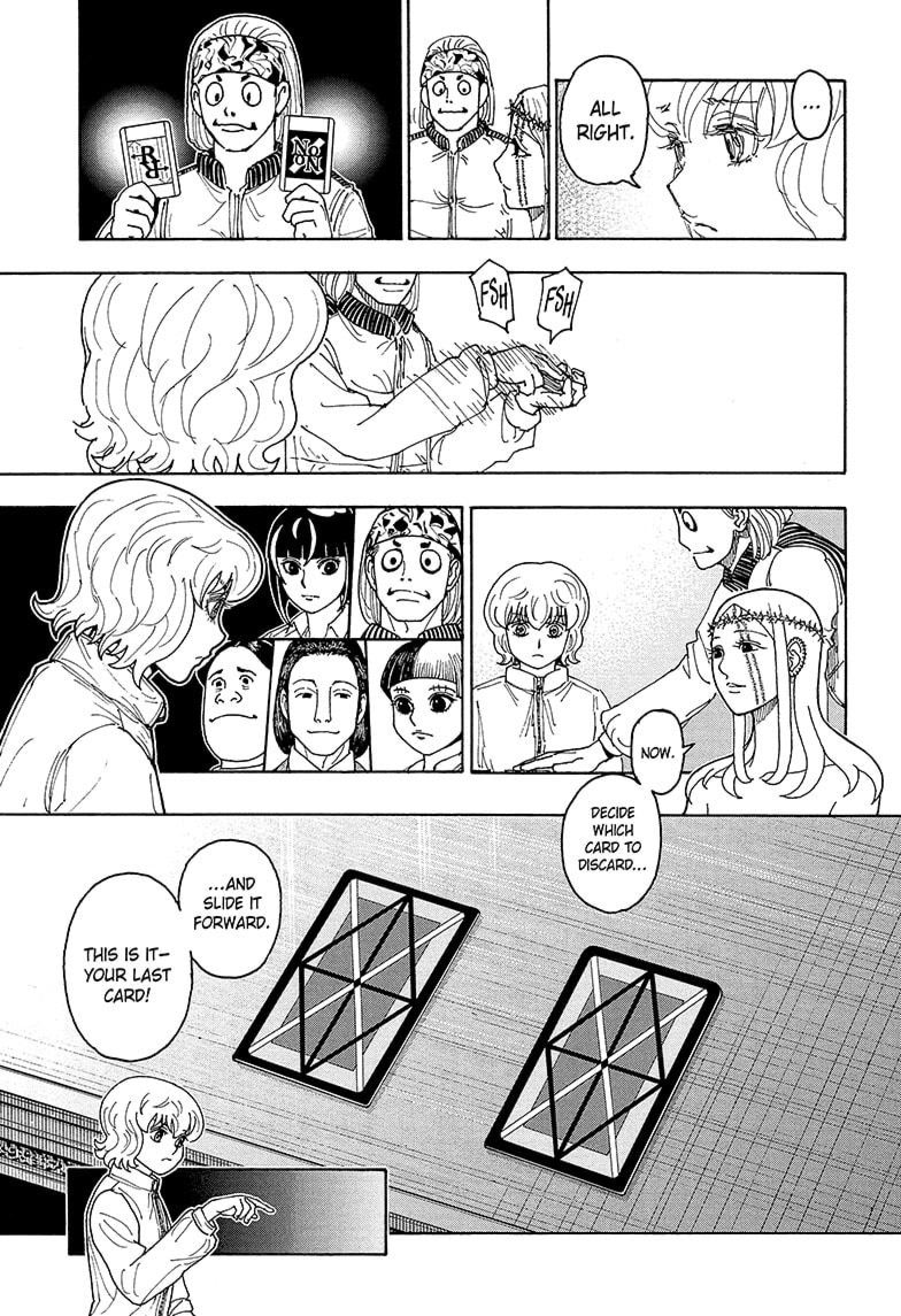

THIS HIDEOUT IS SOMEWHERE ON TIER 5.
NO.
THIS HIDEOUT IS ON EITHER TIER 4 OR 3.
NO.
THIS HIDEOUT IS ON EITHER TIER 2 OR 1.
I KNEW IT, TIER 1!
...
NO.
WHAT...?

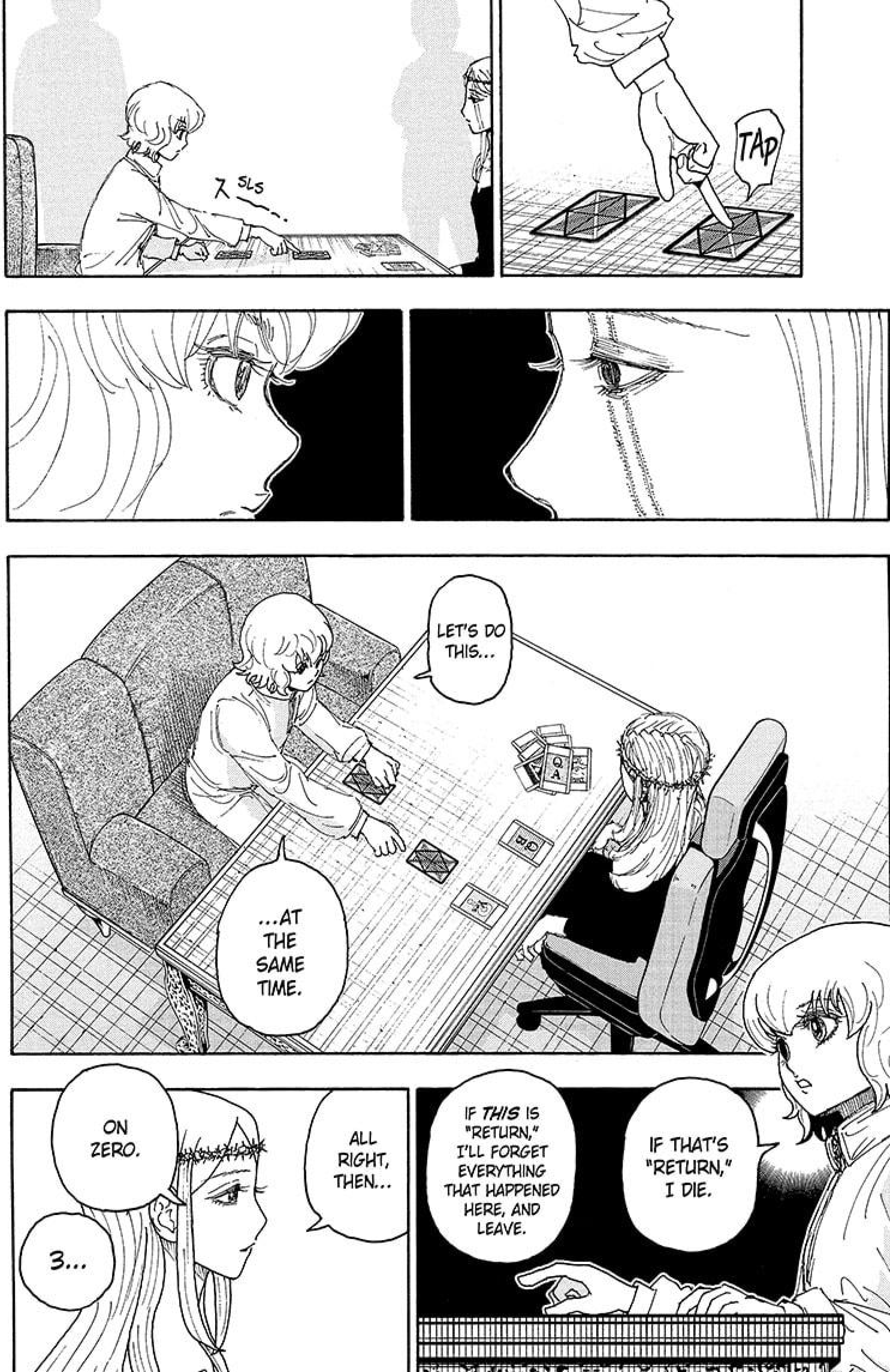

YOU'RE LYING.
NO.
THIS HIDEOUT IS ON BOARD THE BLACK WHALE.
YES.
...
THIS HIDEOUT IS MADE USING A NEN ABILITY.
YES AND NO.
...
WHAT?
WHERE COULD IT...
ゴオオオオン
THOOOOMM
ズズズズズ
RR
MMM
!!
WHA...!
IT CAN'T BE...
ゴゴゴゴ
RRMM
THIS HIDEOUT...

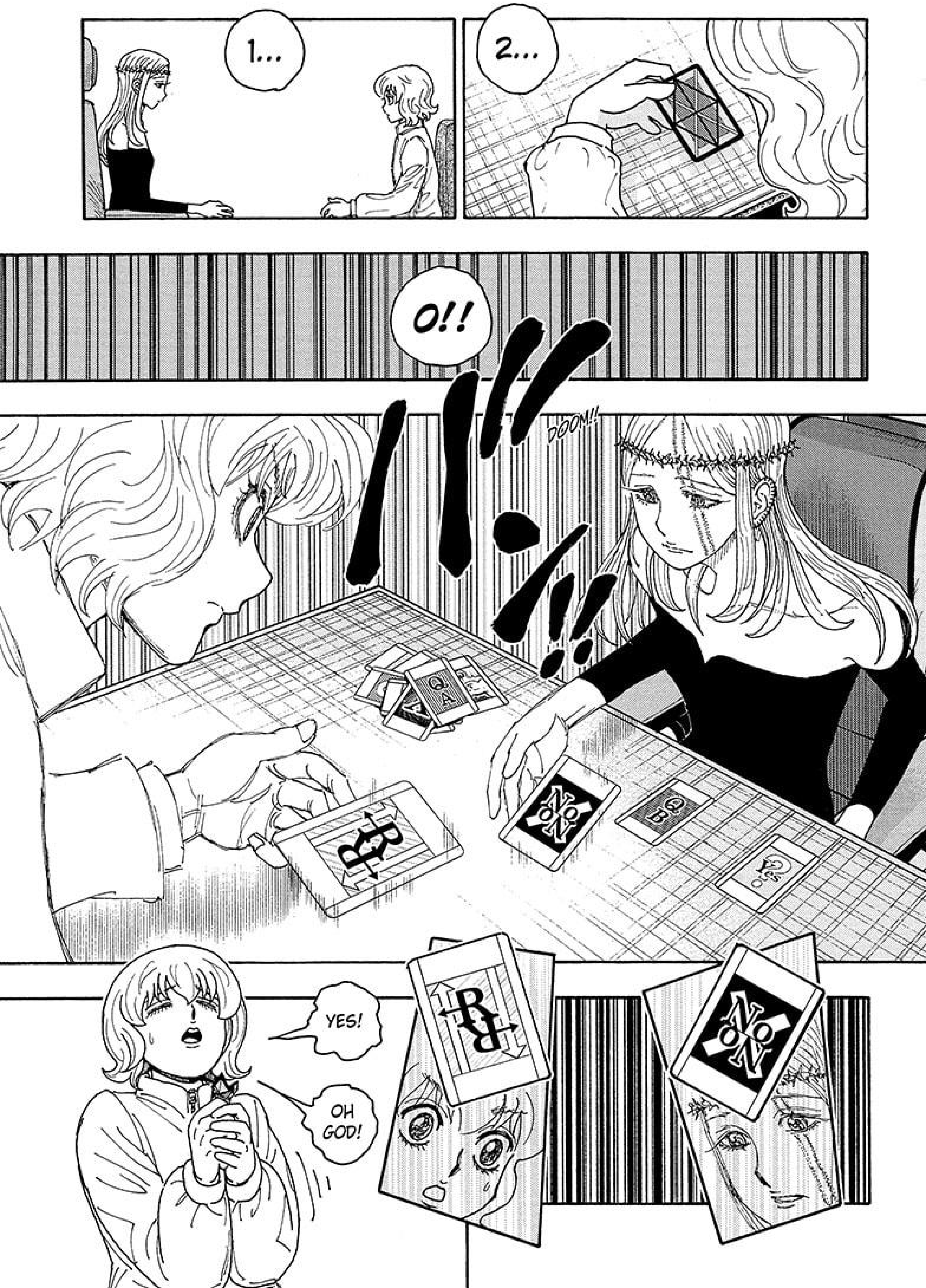

...IS IN BETWEEN TIERS 2 AND 3!!
YES.
...
THIS WAS PLANNED ALL ALONG... SINCE BEFORE THEY BUILT THE BLACK WHALE!! THAT WAS THE SOUND OF THE CENTRAL-GATE CONNECTING TIERS 2 AND 3 BEING COMPLETELY SHUT.
1
2
3
4
5
WE MUST BE AROUND HERE!!
THE ENTRANCE TO THE HIDEOUT IS SOMEWHERE REGULAR PEOPLE CAN ACCESS.
YES AND NO.
THERE ARE MULTIPLE ENTRANCES.
YES.
THERE ARE TWO ENTRANCES IN ALL.
NO.
THREE.
NO.
FOUR.
UMM... NO.
FIVE.
UMM...
YES.
Q
A
HER FIRST PAUSE BEFORE HER ANSWER.
IT WASN'T HESITATION. MORE LIKE COUNTING IN HER MIND TO ENSURE SHE'S TRUTHFUL.

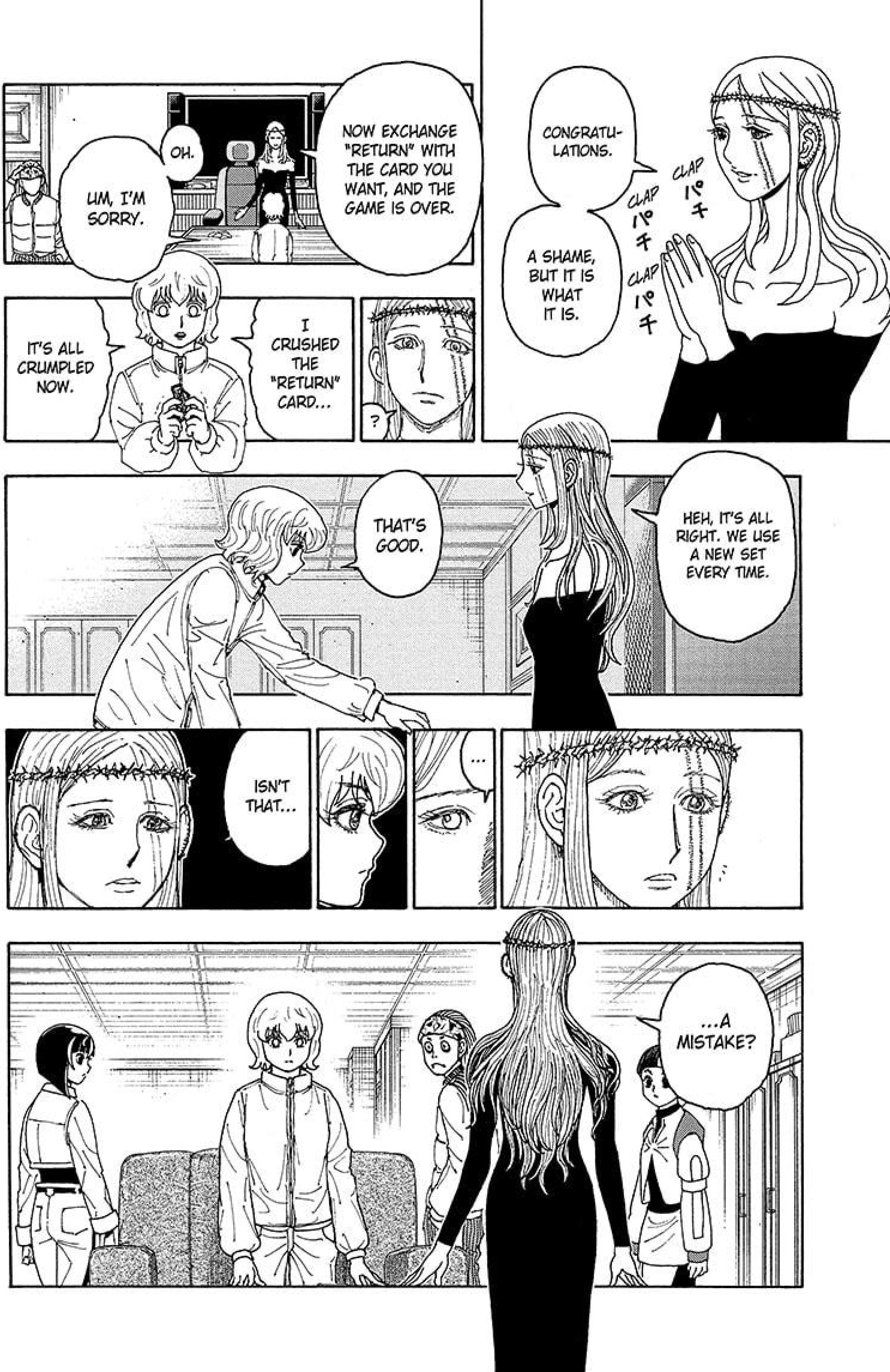

I'LL USE THOSE VOWS AND LIMITATIONS TO MY ADVANTAGE...
INCLUDING YOU, THERE ARE NOW 23 OF YOU IN ALL.
NO.
22.
NO.
...SO YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO GET ANY OF US AFTER I LEAVE.
21.
YES.
IF I GET TO WALK AWAY FROM HERE... THE INFORMATION YOU GATHERED WILL BE VOIDED...
...AND YOU'LL KEEP YOUR PROMISE.
YES.
IF THE "NO" CARD IS THE LAST TO REMAIN...
...YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME.
YES.
YOU'RE THE ONLY SPECIALIST AMONG THE 21 OF YOU.
YES.
YOU KNOW ALL 20 OF THEIR ABILITIES.
NO.
THERE IS CURRENTLY ONE ENHANCER.
NO.
I'LL SQUEEZE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS I CAN OUT OF THEM!!

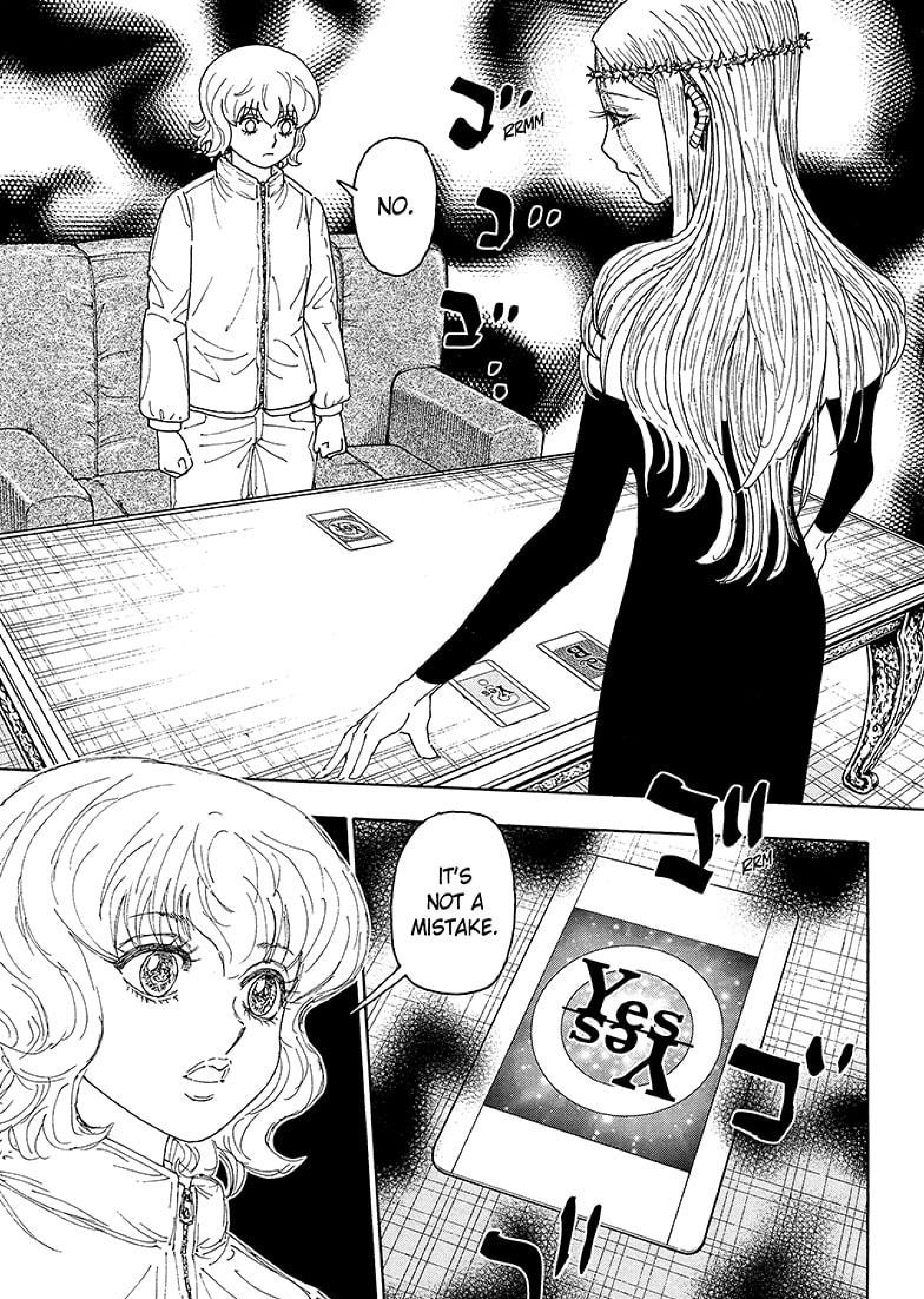

LAST QUESTION...
I'M ACTUALLY GLAD I TALKED TO YOU AND GOT TO KNOW YOU.
IF I GET THE CARD THAT ENABLES ME TO LEAVE...
...I'LL TRY TO CHANGE KAKIN IN WAYS THAT I CAN.
BUT YOU...
YOU DON'T INTEND TO CHANGE YOUR GOAL.
NO.
YOU WON'T CHANGE YOUR GOAL AT ALL?
NO.
YOU WON'T CHANGE YOUR GOAL, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS?
NO.
IF WE COULD...
...FIND SOMETHING, MAYBE...
...ANYTHING, THAT COULD ALLOW US TO MEET HALFWAY...
NO.
I WON'T.
I WILL NOT CHANGE MY GOAL.


...
ALL RIGHT.
FSH
FSH
NOW.
DECIDE WHICH CARD TO DISCARD...
...AND SLIDE IT FORWARD.
THIS IS IT— YOUR LAST CARD!

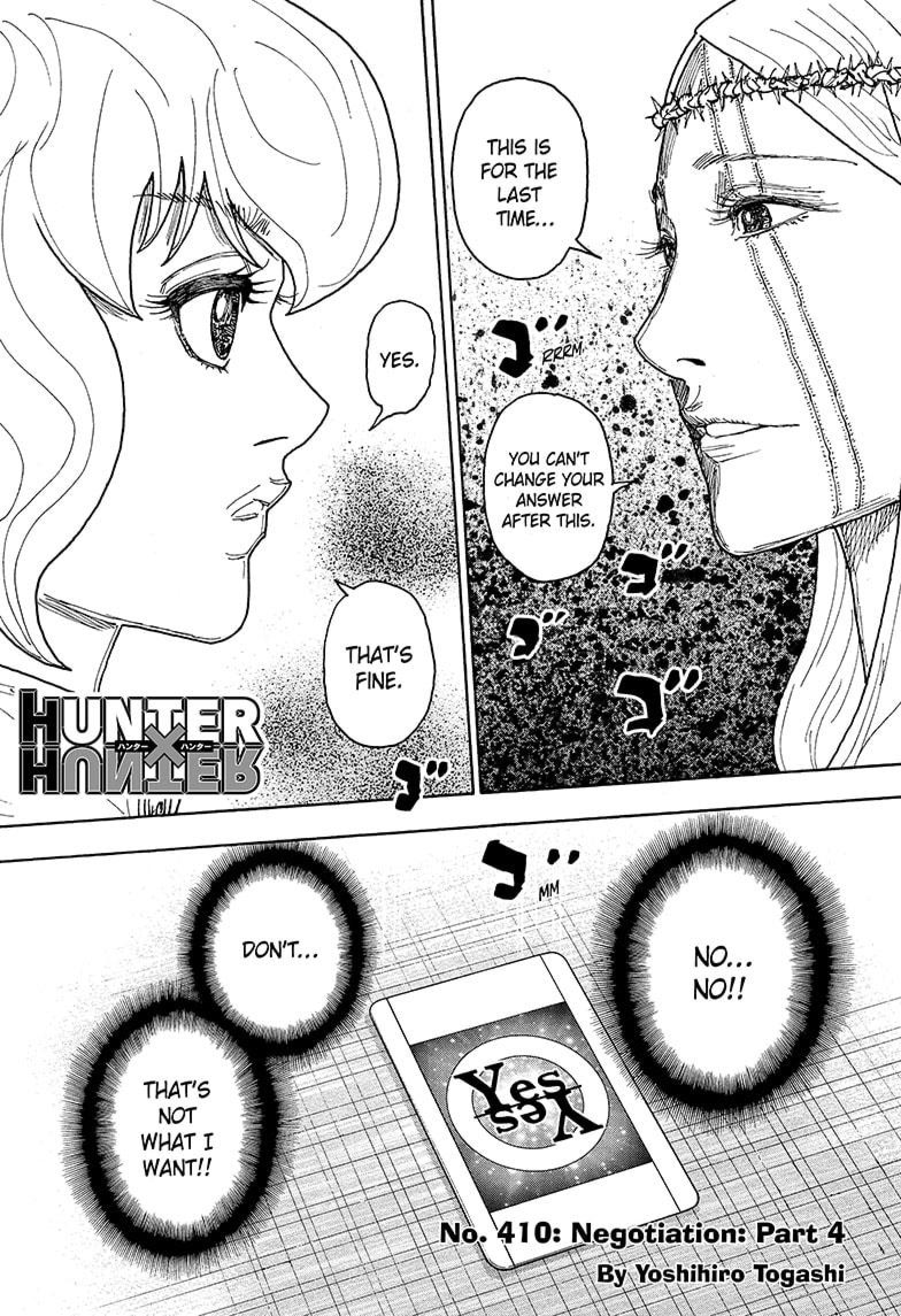

TAP
ス SLS
LET'S DO THIS...
...AT THE SAME TIME.
IF THAT'S "RETURN," I DIE.
IF *THIS* IS "RETURN," I'LL FORGET EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED HERE, AND LEAVE.
ALL RIGHT, THEN...
ON ZERO.
3...


1...
2...
0!!
DOOM!!
YES!
OH GOD!


CONGRATULATIONS.
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
A SHAME, BUT IT IS WHAT IT IS.
NOW EXCHANGE "RETURN" WITH THE CARD YOU WANT, AND THE GAME IS OVER.
OH.
UM, I'M SORRY.
?
I CRUSHED THE "RETURN" CARD...
IT'S ALL CRUMPLED NOW.
HEH, IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE USE A NEW SET EVERY TIME.
THAT'S GOOD.
...
ISN'T THAT...
...A MISTAKE?

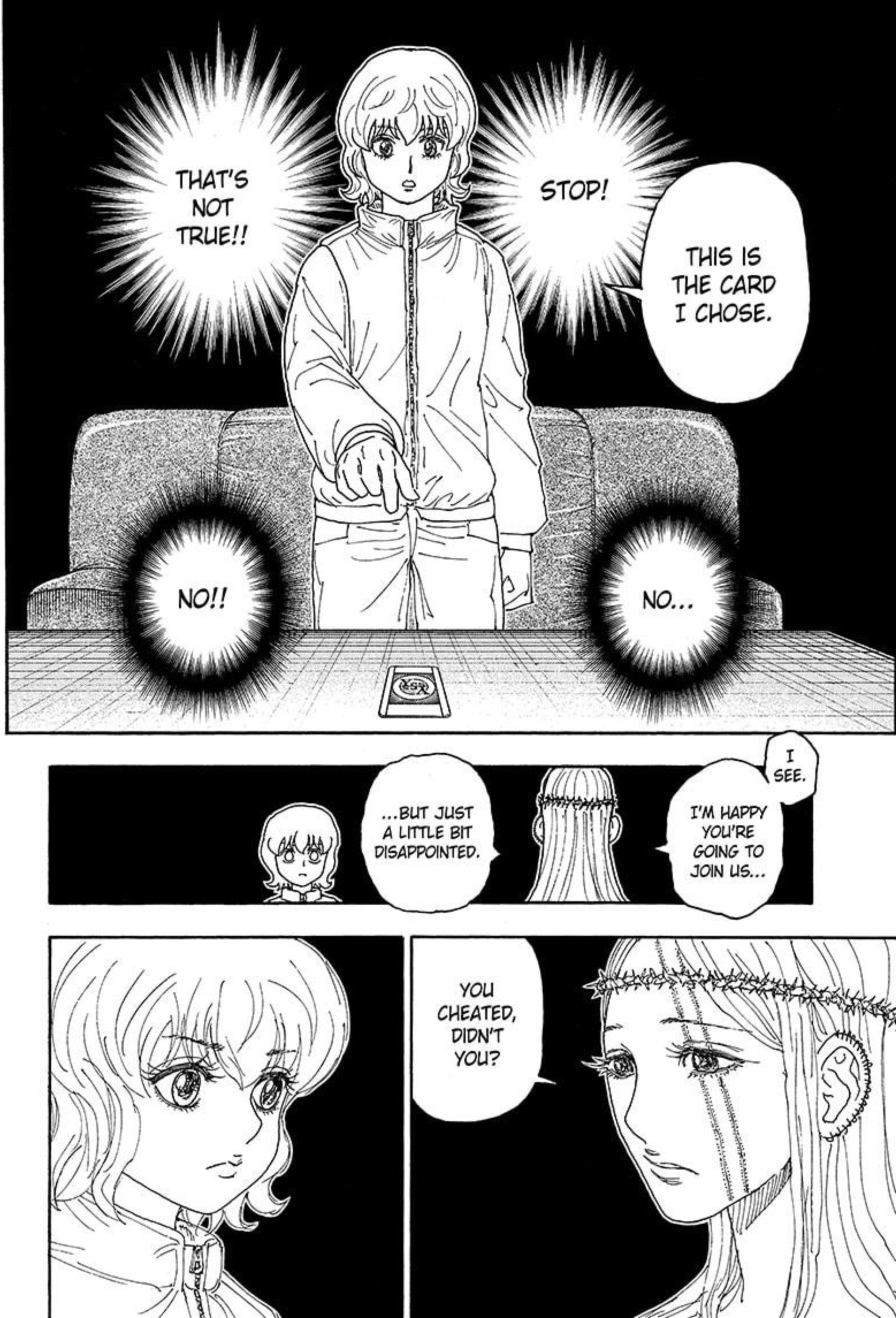

ゴ
RRMM
NO.
ゴ
ゴ
ゴ
ゴ
RRM
IT'S NOT A MISTAKE.
Yes
ゴ
ゴ

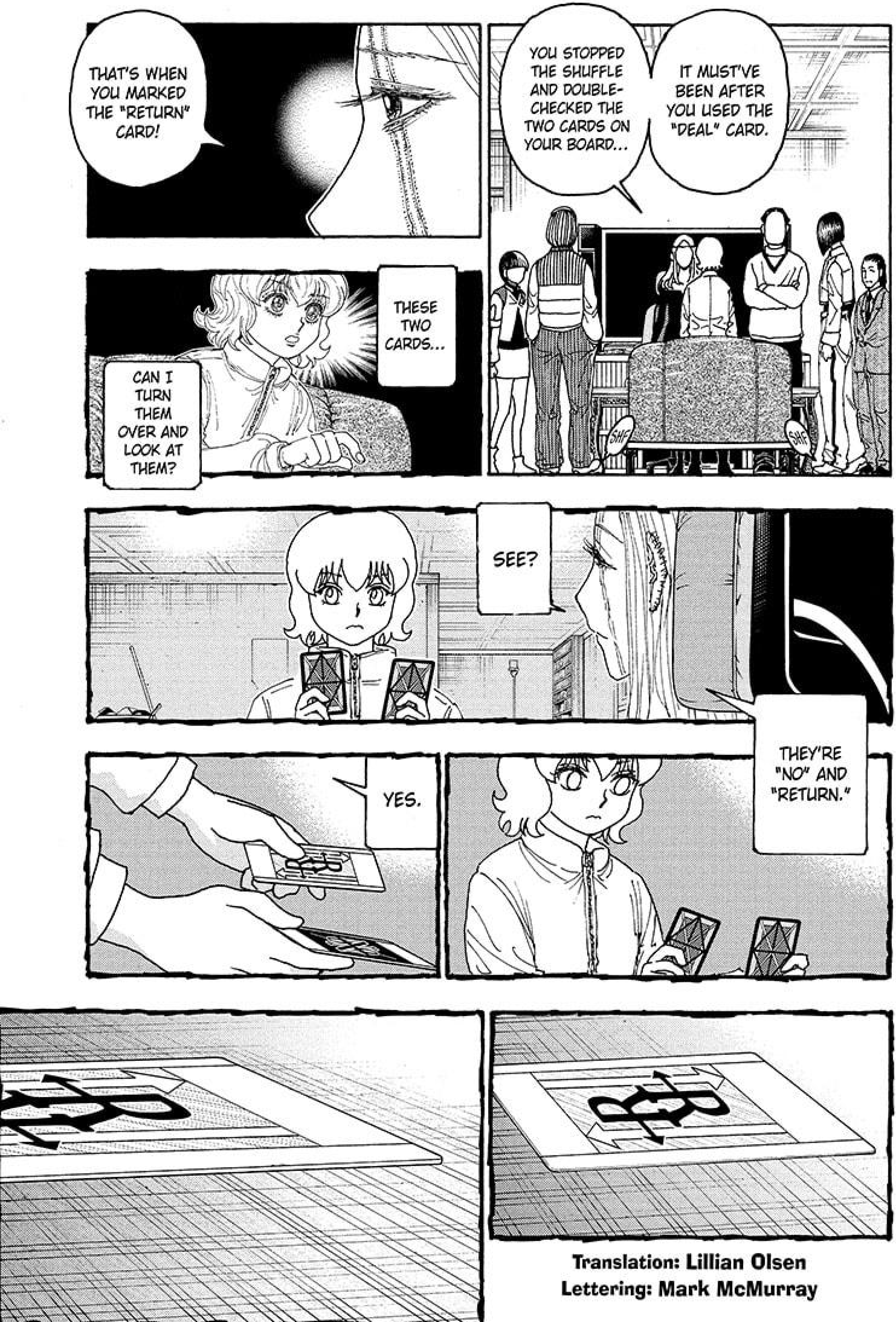
To be continued!


THIS IS FOR THE LAST TIME...
RRRM
YOU CAN'T CHANGE YOUR ANSWER AFTER THIS.
YES.
THAT'S FINE.
HUNTER×HUNTER
ハンター ハンター
MM
NO... NO!!
DON'T...
THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANT!!
Yes

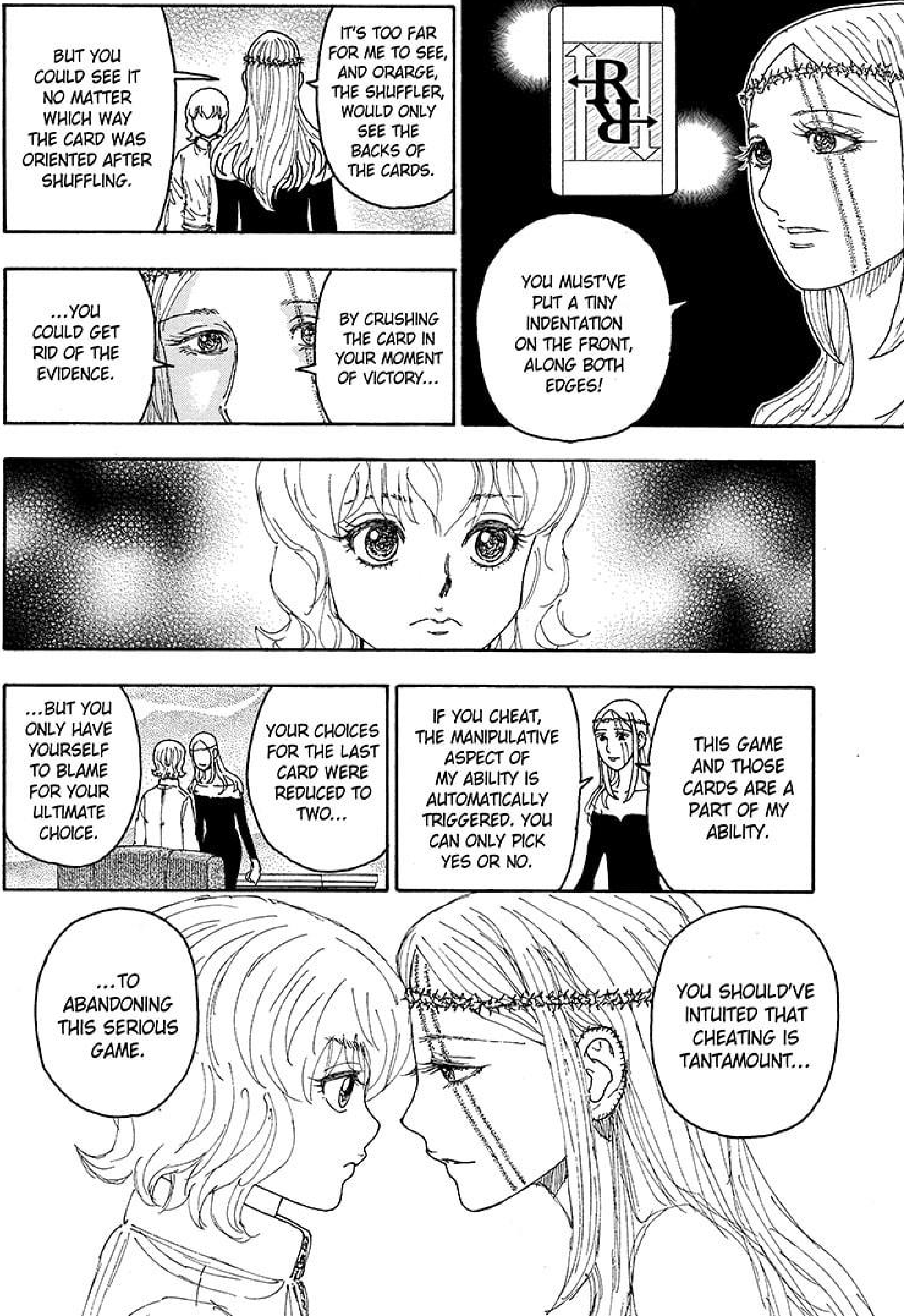
No. 410: Negotiation: Part 4

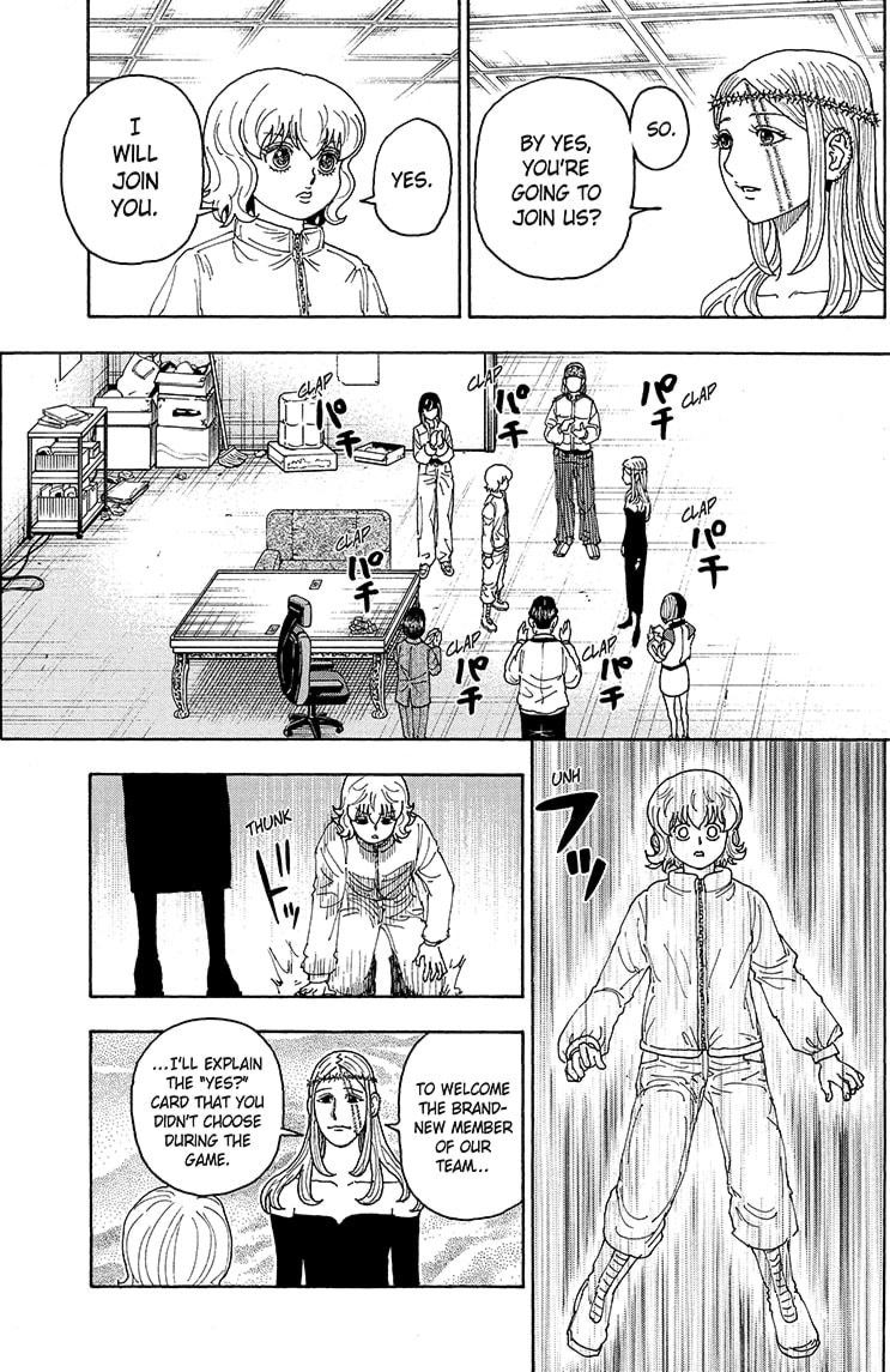
By Yoshihiro Togashi

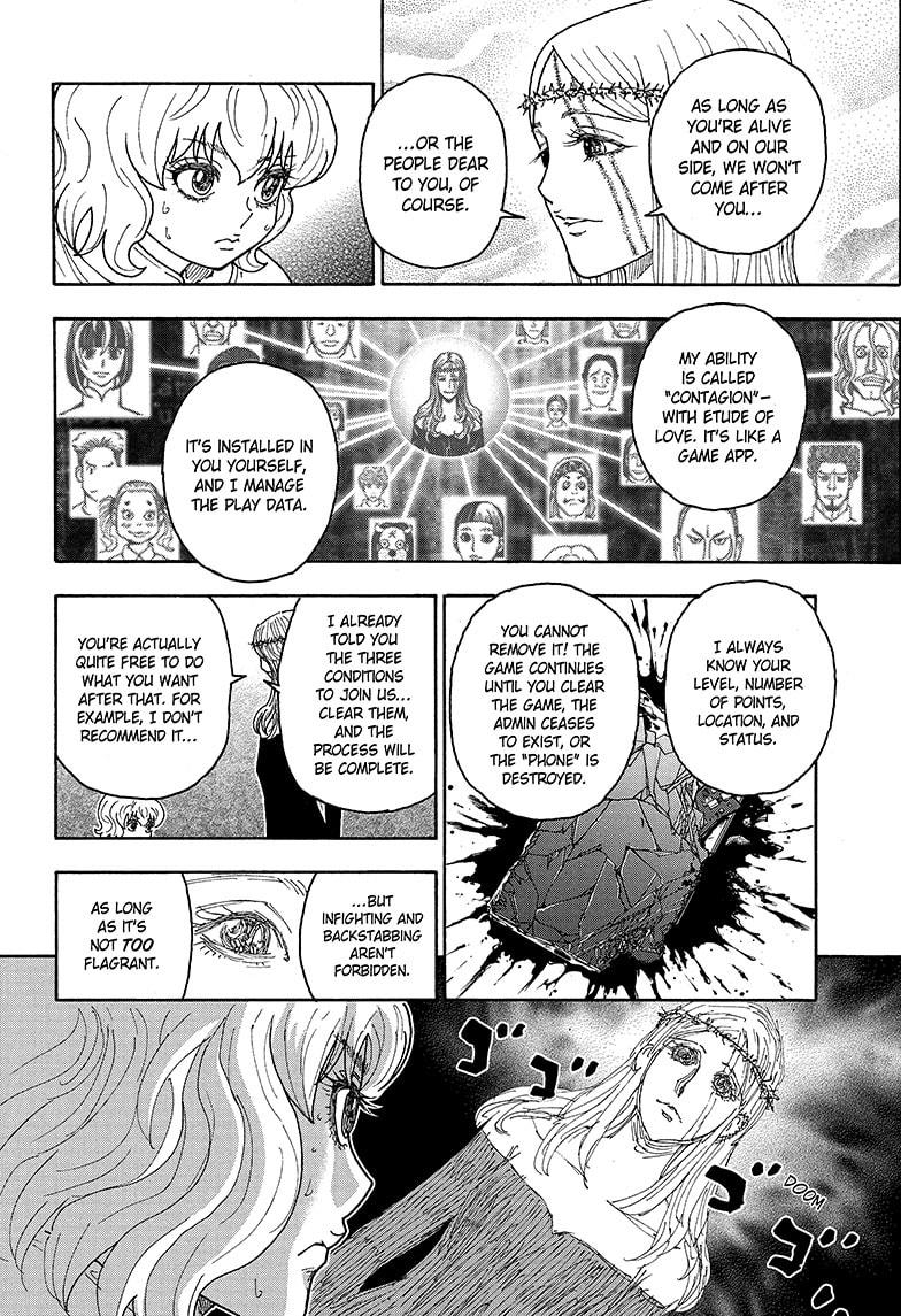

THIS IS THE CARD I CHOSE.
STOP!
THAT'S NOT TRUE!!
NO...
NO!!
I SEE.
I'M HAPPY YOU'RE GOING TO JOIN US...
...BUT JUST A LITTLE BIT DISAPPOINTED.
YOU CHEATED, DIDN'T YOU?

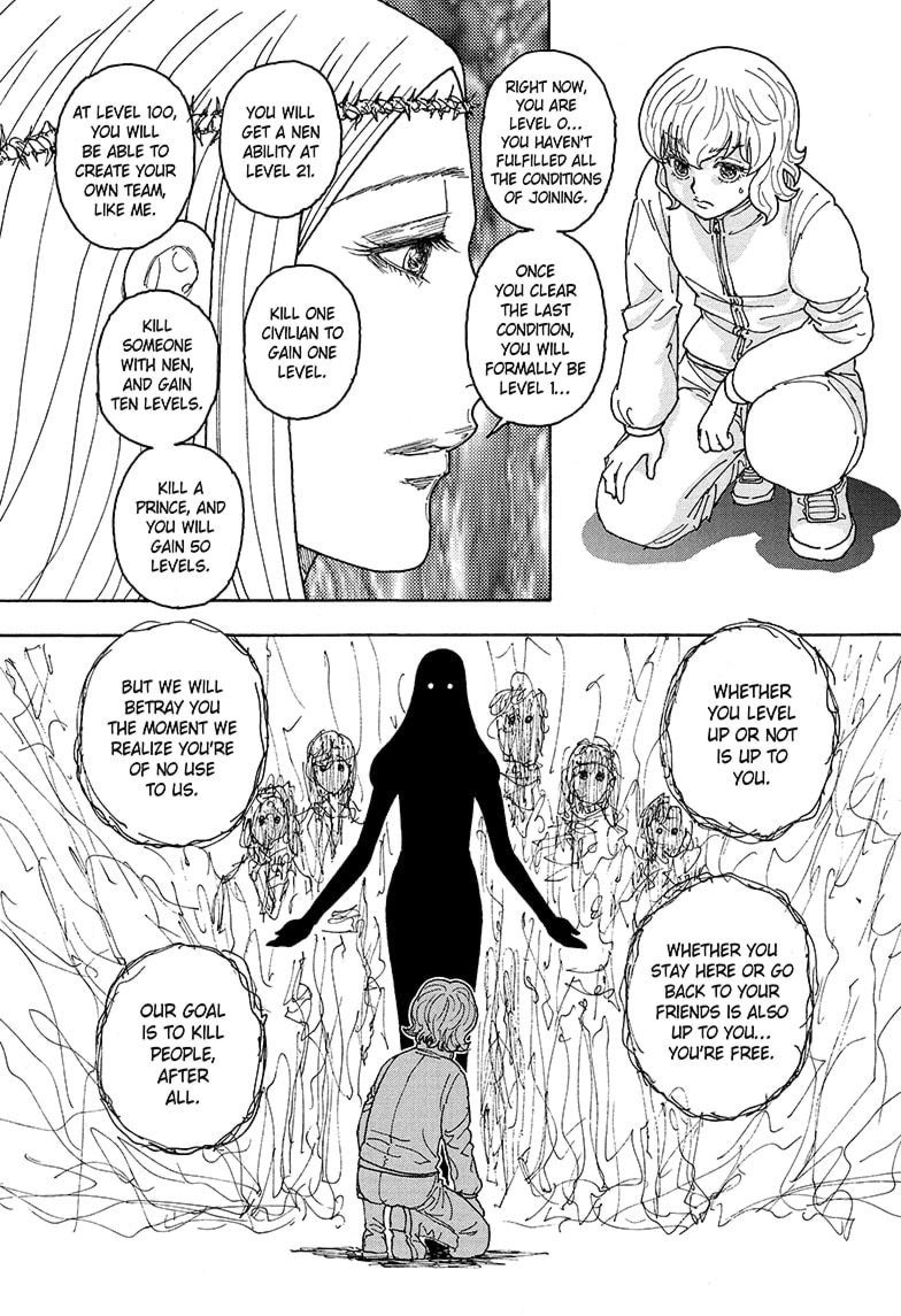

IT MUST'VE BEEN AFTER YOU USED THE "DEAL" CARD.
YOU STOPPED THE SHUFFLE AND DOUBLE-CHECKED THE TWO CARDS ON YOUR BOARD...
SHF
SHF
THAT'S WHEN YOU MARKED THE "RETURN" CARD!
THESE TWO CARDS...
CAN I TURN THEM OVER AND LOOK AT THEM?
SEE?
THEY'RE "NO" AND "RETURN."
YES.

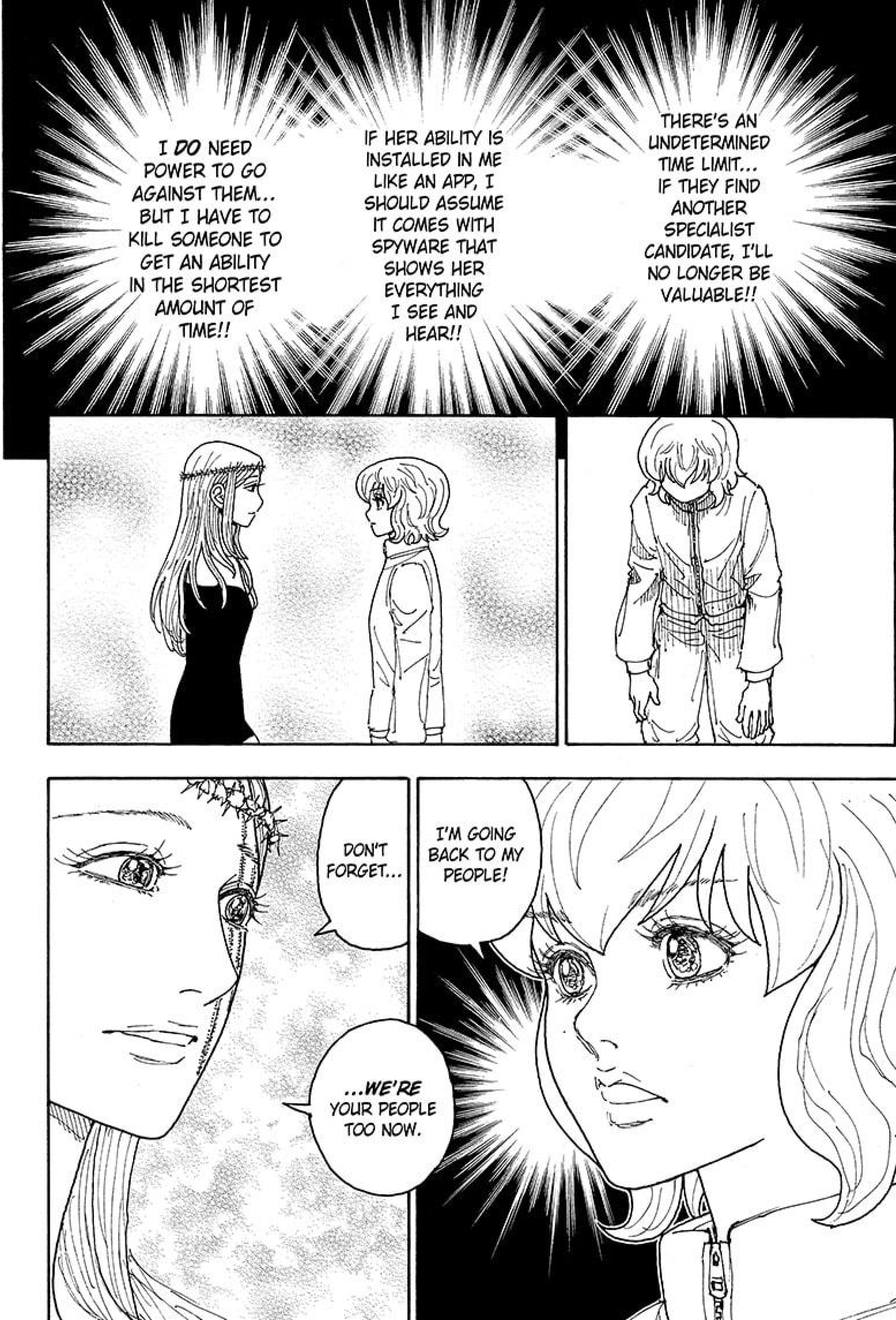
Translation: Lillian Olsen
Lettering: Mark McMurray

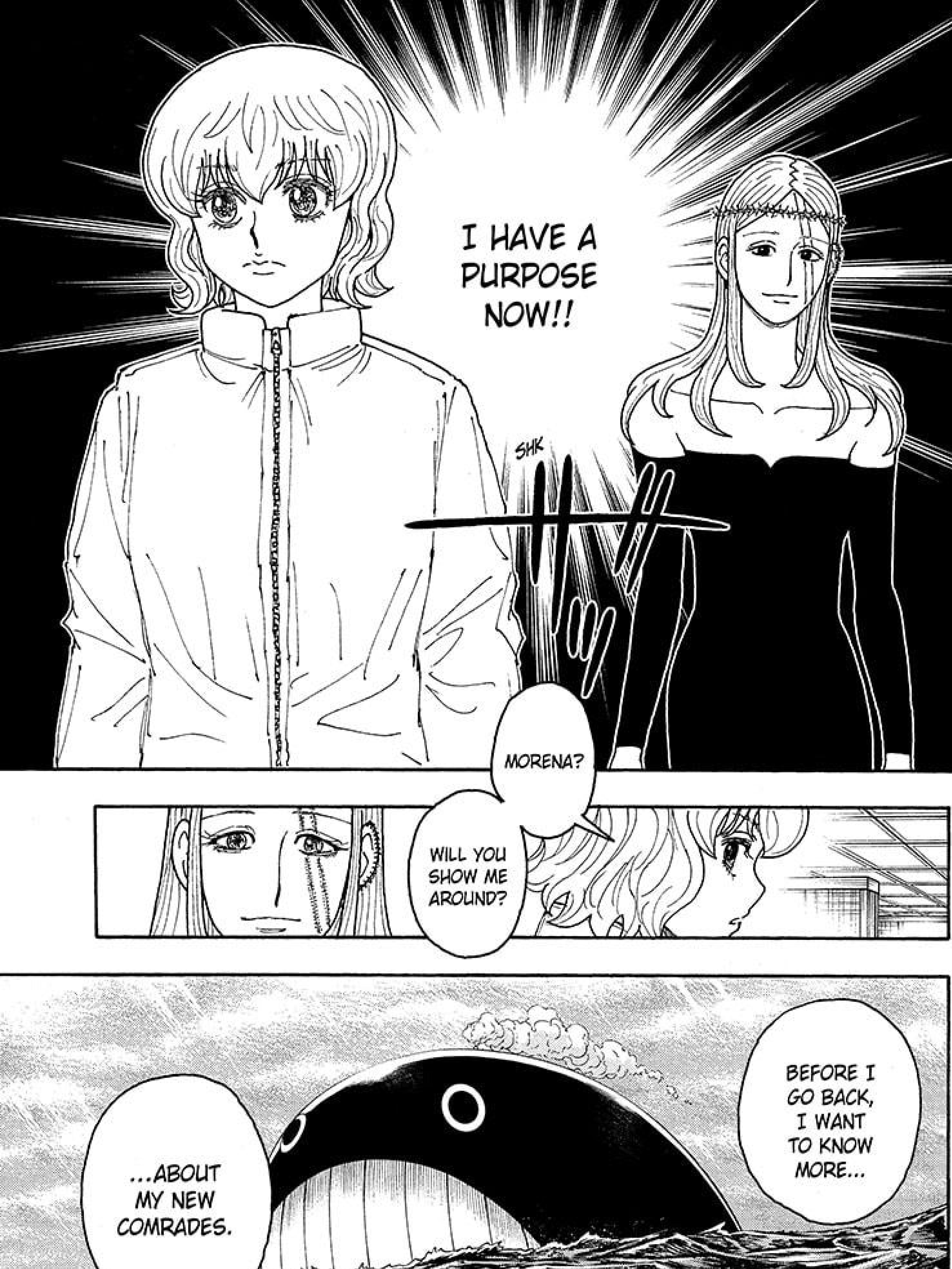

R
R
YOU MUST'VE PUT A TINY INDENTATION ON THE FRONT, ALONG BOTH EDGES!
IT'S TOO FAR FOR ME TO SEE, AND ORARGE, THE SHUFFLER, WOULD ONLY SEE THE BACKS OF THE CARDS.
BUT YOU COULD SEE IT NO MATTER WHICH WAY THE CARD WAS ORIENTED AFTER SHUFFLING.
BY CRUSHING THE CARD IN YOUR MOMENT OF VICTORY...
...YOU COULD GET RID OF THE EVIDENCE.
THIS GAME AND THOSE CARDS ARE A PART OF MY ABILITY.
IF YOU CHEAT, THE MANIPULATIVE ASPECT OF MY ABILITY IS AUTOMATICALLY TRIGGERED. YOU CAN ONLY PICK YES OR NO.
YOUR CHOICES FOR THE LAST CARD WERE REDUCED TO TWO...
...BUT YOU ONLY HAVE YOURSELF TO BLAME FOR YOUR ULTIMATE CHOICE.
YOU SHOULD'VE INTUITED THAT CHEATING IS TANTAMOUNT...
...TO ABANDONING THIS SERIOUS GAME.

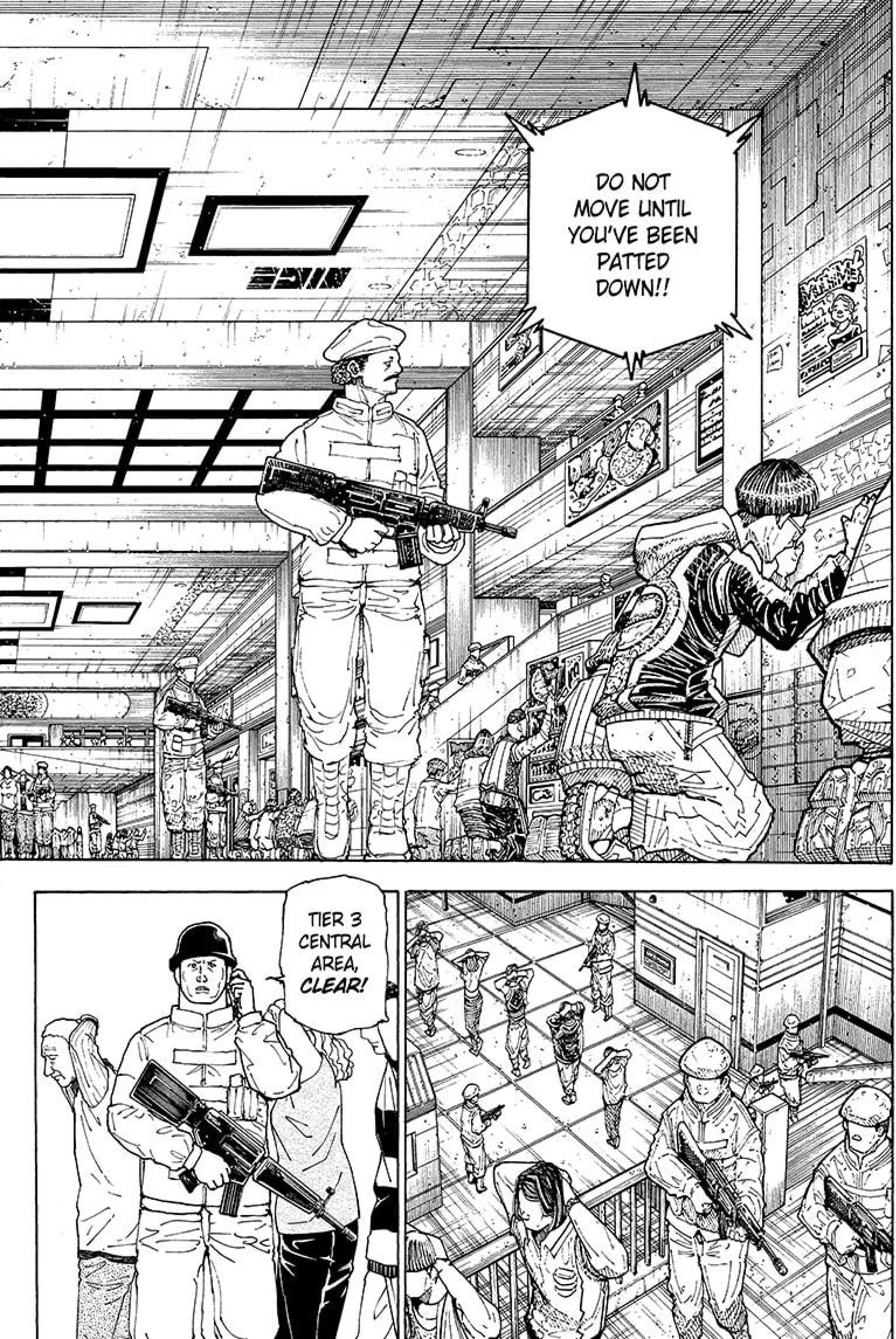

SO.
BY YES, YOU'RE GOING TO JOIN US?
YES.
I WILL JOIN YOU.
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
CLAP パチ
UNH フッ
THUNK ドッ
TO WELCOME THE BRAND-NEW MEMBER OF OUR TEAM...
...I'LL EXPLAIN THE "YES?" CARD THAT YOU DIDN'T CHOOSE DURING THE GAME.

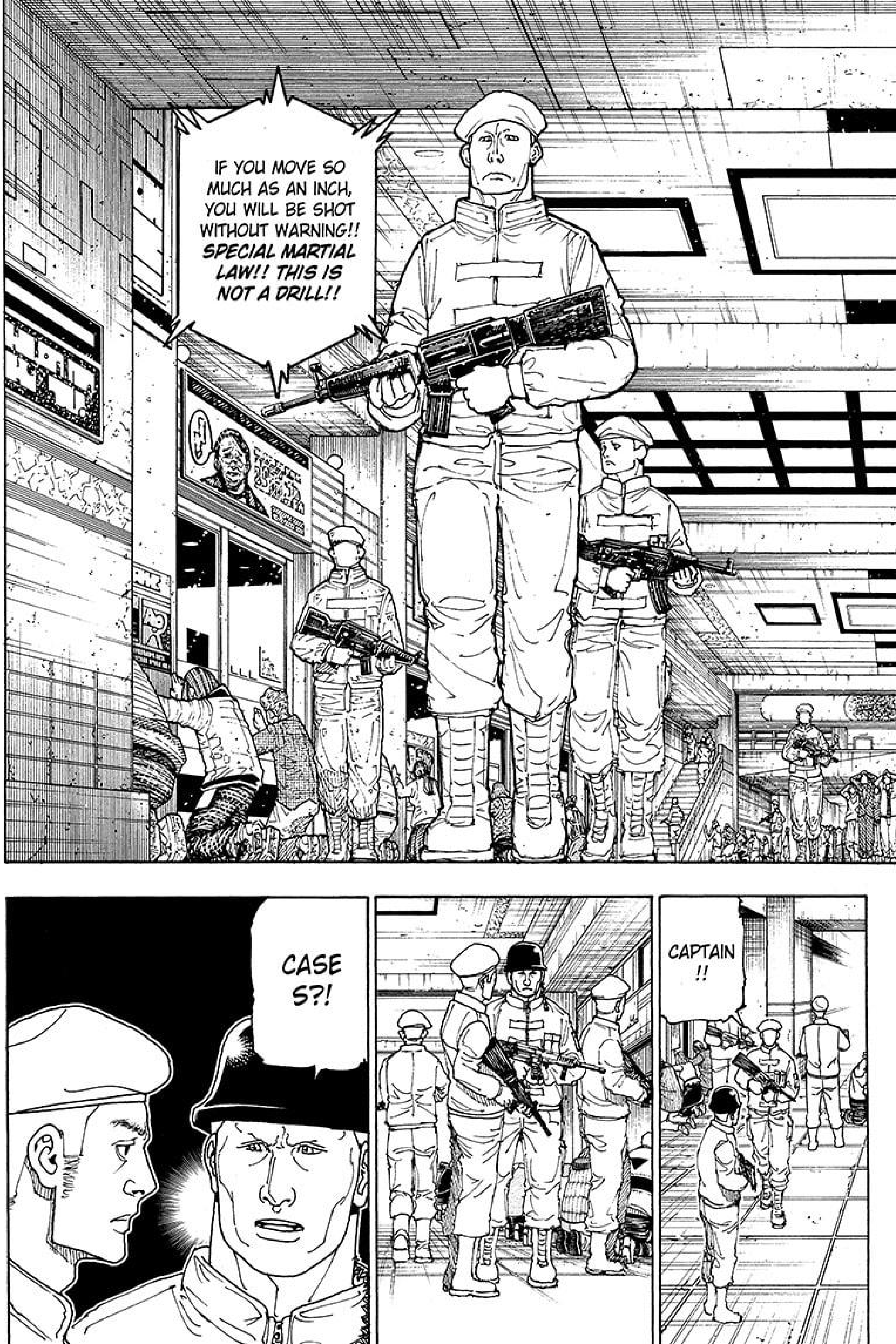

AS LONG AS YOU'RE ALIVE AND ON OUR SIDE, WE WON'T COME AFTER YOU…
…OR THE PEOPLE DEAR TO YOU, OF COURSE.
MY ABILITY IS CALLED "CONTAGION"— WITH ETUDE OF LOVE. IT'S LIKE A GAME APP.
IT'S INSTALLED IN YOU YOURSELF, AND I MANAGE THE PLAY DATA.
I ALWAYS KNOW YOUR LEVEL, NUMBER OF POINTS, LOCATION, AND STATUS.
YOU CANNOT REMOVE IT! THE GAME CONTINUES UNTIL YOU CLEAR THE GAME, THE ADMIN CEASES TO EXIST, OR THE "PHONE" IS DESTROYED.
I ALREADY TOLD YOU THE THREE CONDITIONS TO JOIN US… CLEAR THEM, AND THE PROCESS WILL BE COMPLETE.
YOU'RE ACTUALLY QUITE FREE TO DO WHAT YOU WANT AFTER THAT. FOR EXAMPLE, I DON'T RECOMMEND IT…
…BUT INFIGHTING AND BACKSTABBING AREN'T FORBIDDEN.
AS LONG AS IT'S NOT *TOO* FLAGRANT.
ゴゴゴ
DOOM

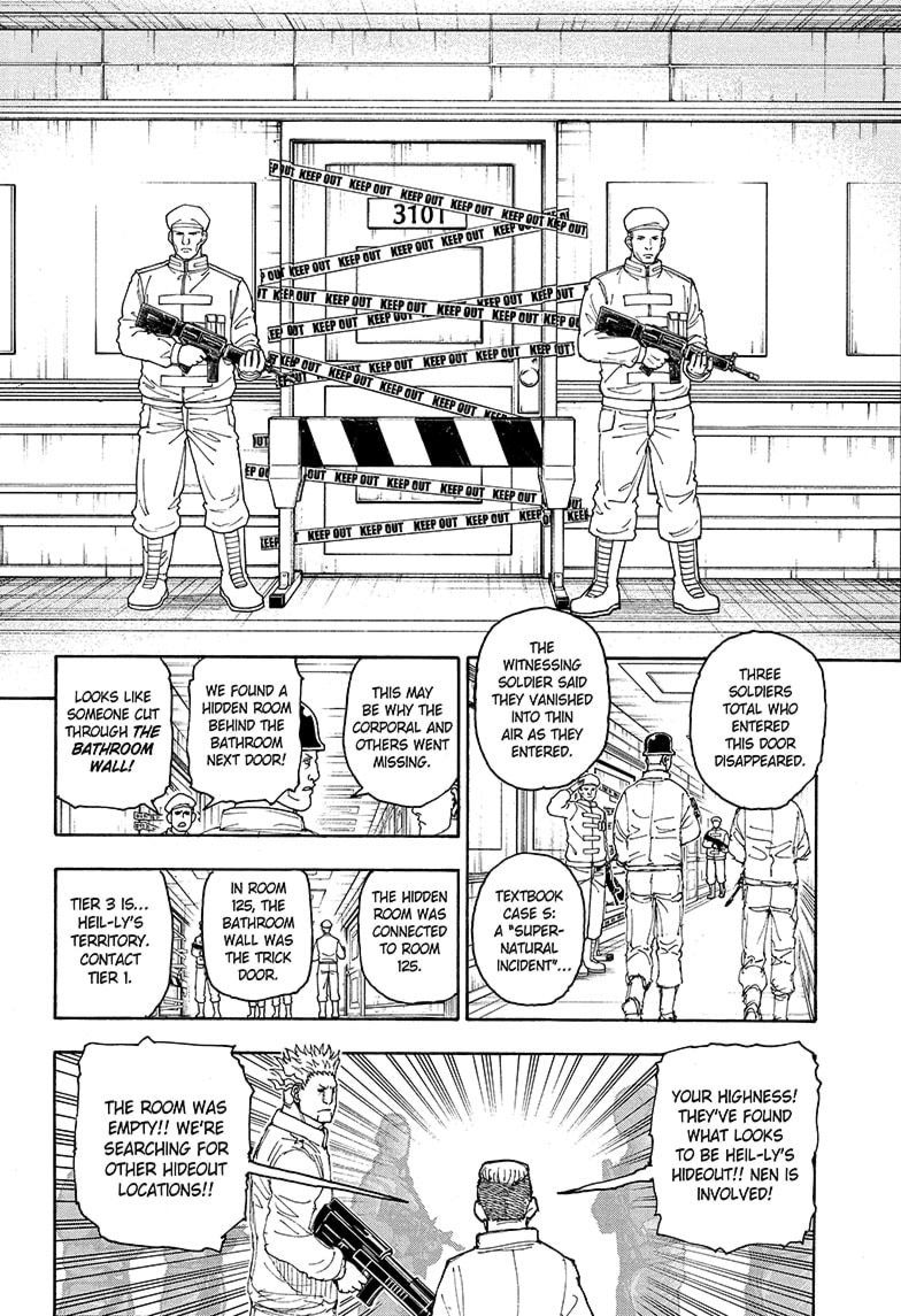

RIGHT NOW, YOU ARE LEVEL 0... YOU HAVEN'T FULFILLED ALL THE CONDITIONS OF JOINING.
ONCE YOU CLEAR THE LAST CONDITION, YOU WILL FORMALLY BE LEVEL 1...
KILL ONE CIVILIAN TO GAIN ONE LEVEL.
KILL SOMEONE WITH NEN, AND GAIN TEN LEVELS.
KILL A PRINCE, AND YOU WILL GAIN 50 LEVELS.
YOU WILL GET A NEN ABILITY AT LEVEL 21.
AT LEVEL 100, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CREATE YOUR OWN TEAM, LIKE ME.
WHETHER YOU LEVEL UP OR NOT IS UP TO YOU.
WHETHER YOU STAY HERE OR GO BACK TO YOUR FRIENDS IS ALSO UP TO YOU... YOU'RE FREE.
BUT WE WILL BETRAY YOU THE MOMENT WE REALIZE YOU'RE OF NO USE TO US.
OUR GOAL IS TO KILL PEOPLE, AFTER ALL.

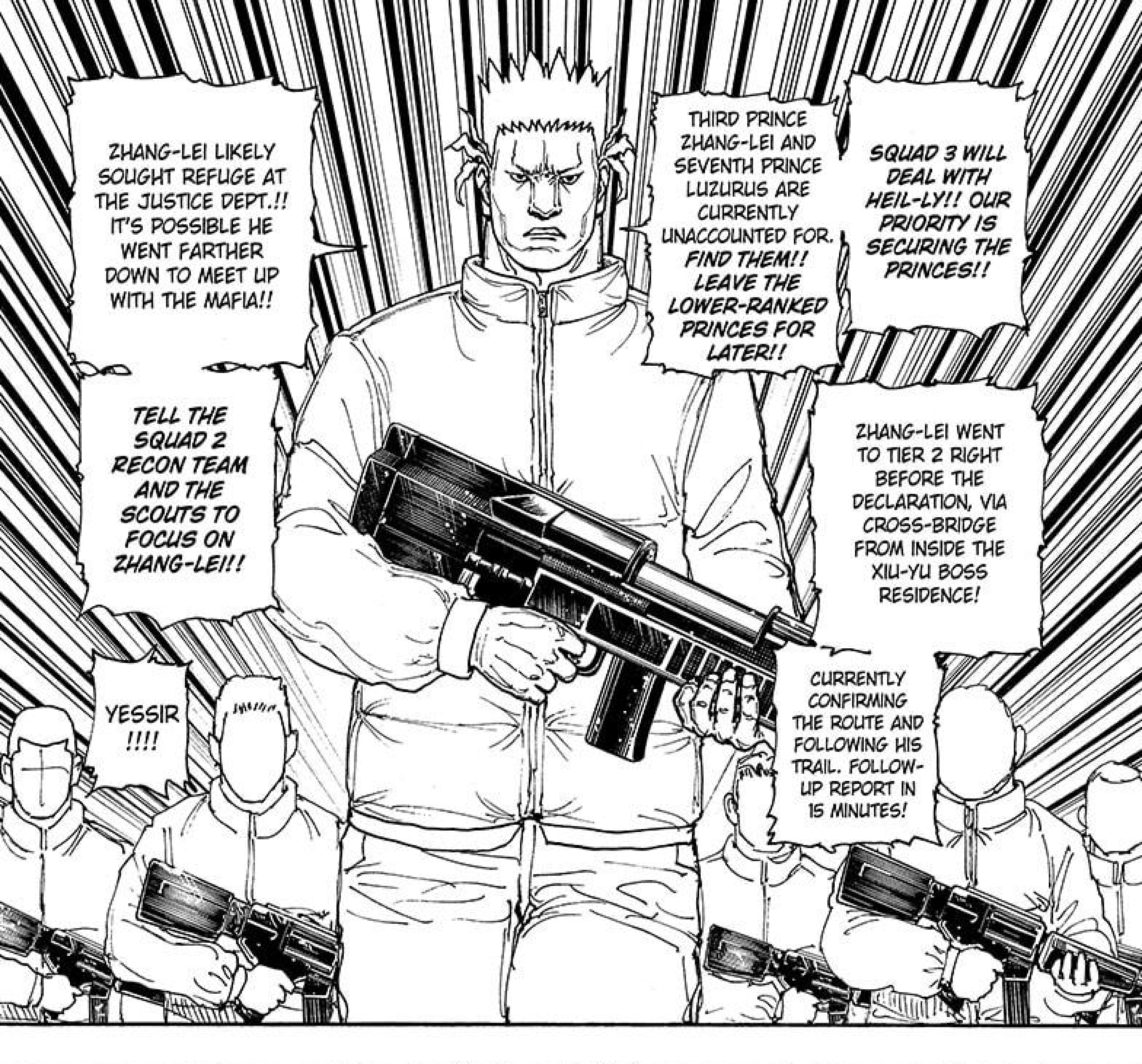

THERE'S AN UNDETERMINED TIME LIMIT... IF THEY FIND ANOTHER SPECIALIST CANDIDATE, I'LL NO LONGER BE VALUABLE!!
IF HER ABILITY IS INSTALLED IN ME LIKE AN APP, I SHOULD ASSUME IT COMES WITH SPYWARE THAT SHOWS HER EVERYTHING I SEE AND HEAR!!
I *DO* NEED POWER TO GO AGAINST THEM... BUT I HAVE TO KILL SOMEONE TO GET AN ABILITY IN THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME!!
I'M GOING BACK TO MY PEOPLE!
DON'T FORGET...
...WE'RE YOUR PEOPLE TOO NOW.

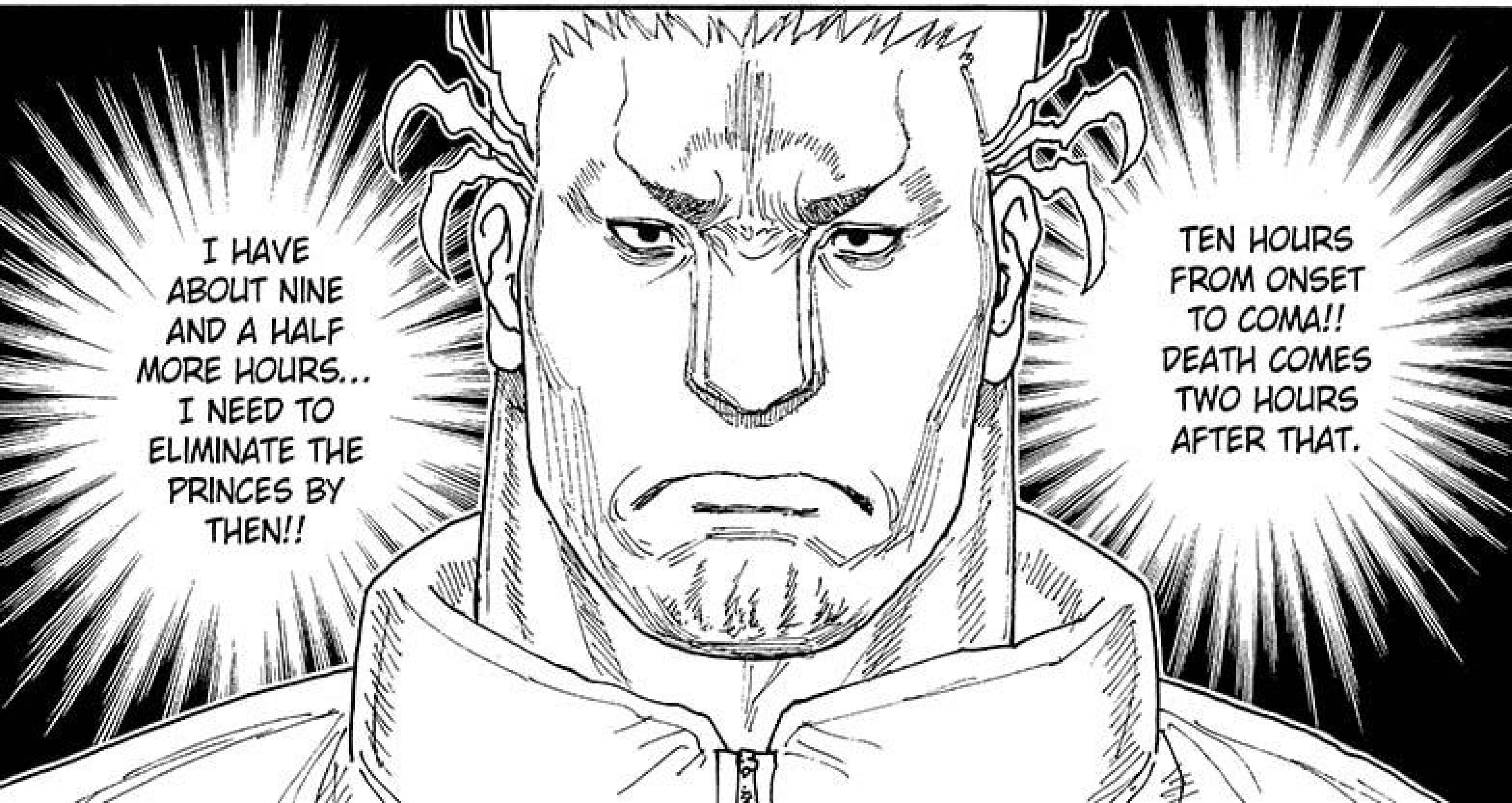

I HAVE A PURPOSE NOW!!
SHK
MORENA?
WILL YOU SHOW ME AROUND?
BEFORE I GO BACK, I WANT TO KNOW MORE...
...ABOUT MY NEW COMRADES.

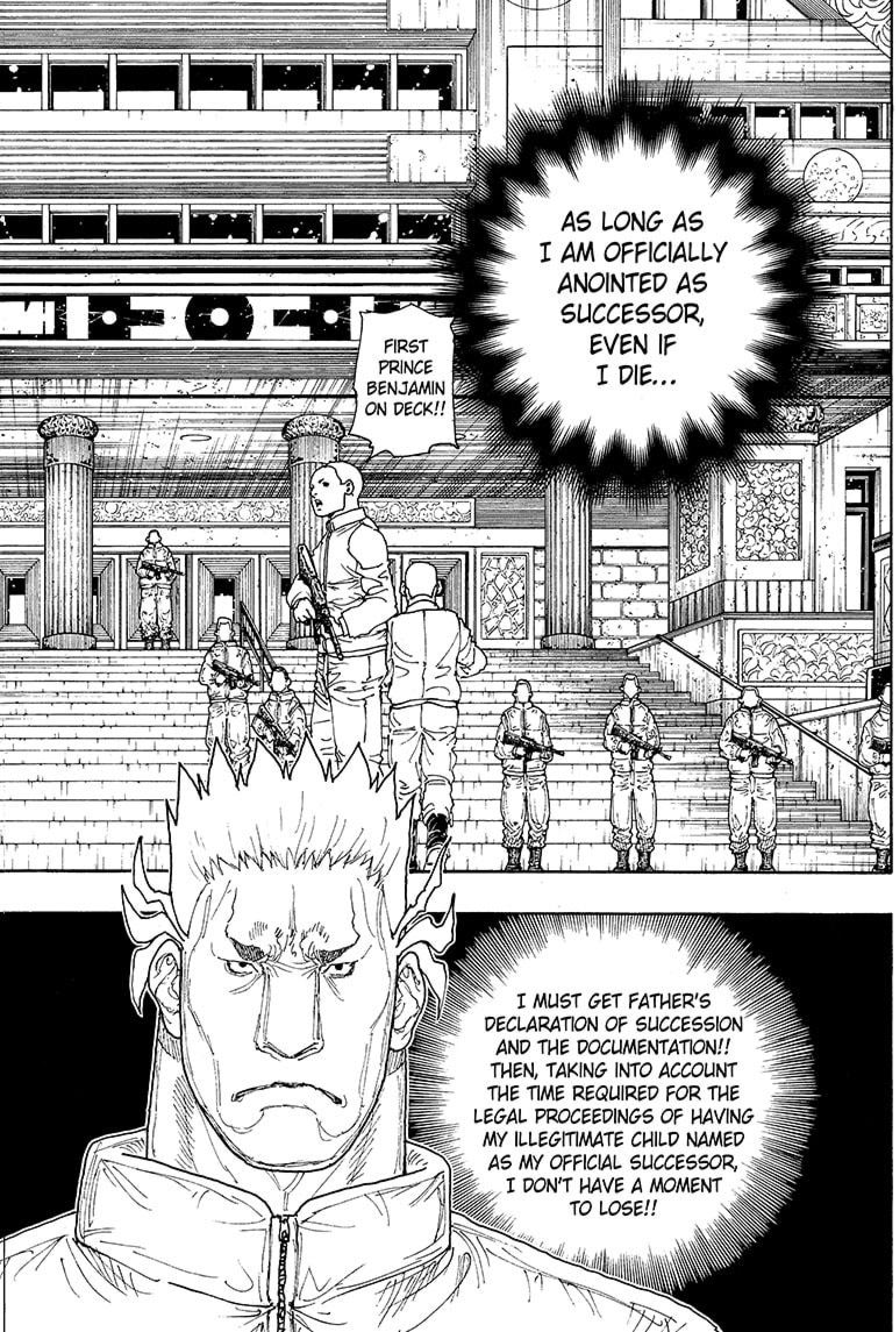

DO NOT MOVE UNTIL YOU'VE BEEN PATTED DOWN!!
TIER 3 CENTRAL AREA, *CLEAR!*

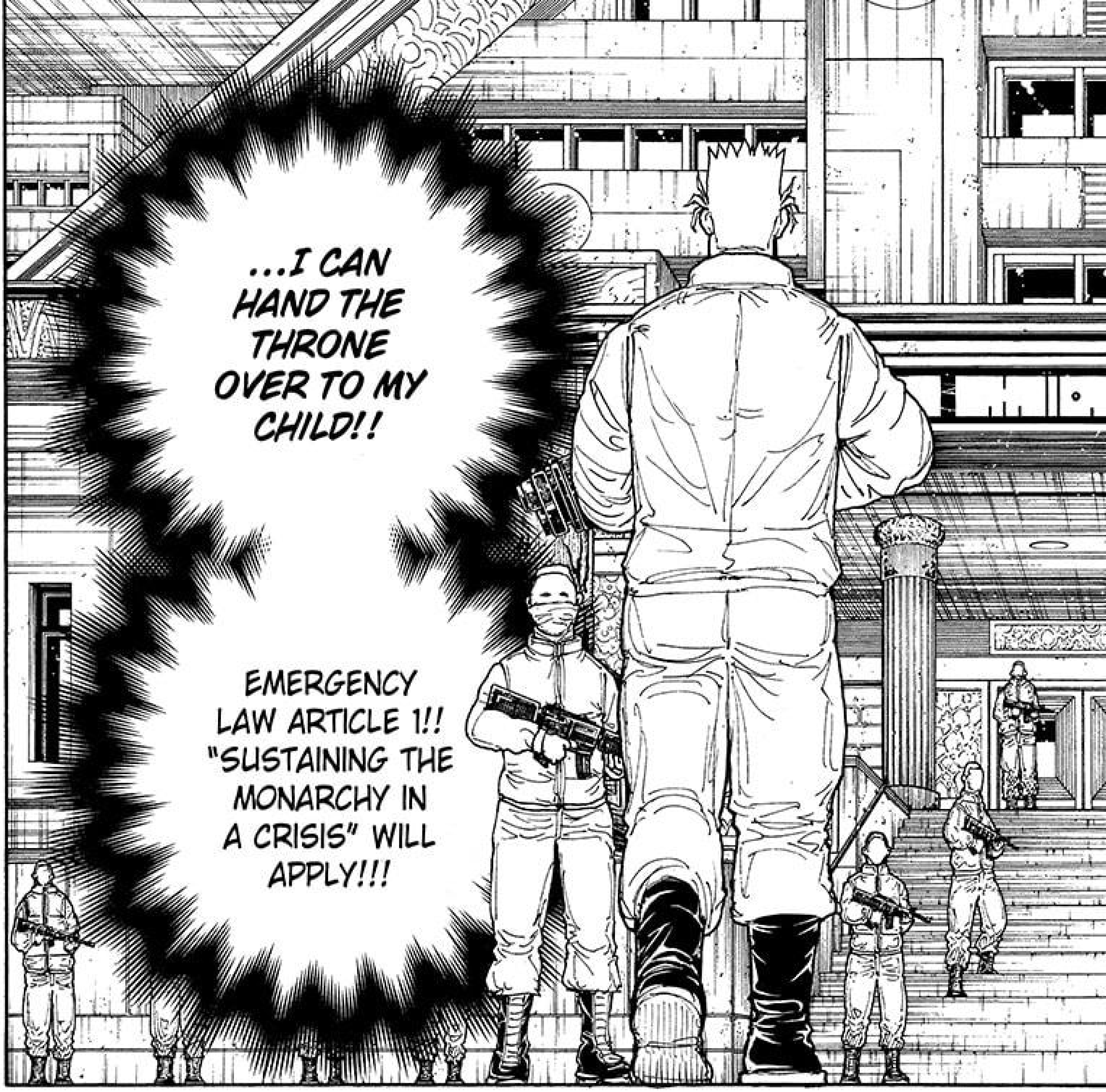

IF YOU MOVE SO MUCH AS AN INCH, YOU WILL BE SHOT WITHOUT WARNING!! *SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW!! THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!*
CAPTAIN !!
CASE S?!


3101
KEEP OUT
THREE SOLDIERS TOTAL WHO ENTERED THIS DOOR DISAPPEARED.
THE WITNESSING SOLDIER SAID THEY VANISHED INTO THIN AIR AS THEY ENTERED.
TEXTBOOK CASE 5: A "SUPER-NATURAL INCIDENT"...
THIS MAY BE WHY THE CORPORAL AND OTHERS WENT MISSING.
WE FOUND A HIDDEN ROOM BEHIND THE BATHROOM NEXT DOOR!
LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE CUT THROUGH *THE BATHROOM WALL!*
THE HIDDEN ROOM WAS CONNECTED TO ROOM 125.
IN ROOM 125, THE BATHROOM WALL WAS THE TRICK DOOR.
TIER 3 IS... HEIL-LY'S TERRITORY. CONTACT TIER 1.
YOUR HIGHNESS! THEY'VE FOUND WHAT LOOKS TO BE HEIL-LY'S HIDEOUT!! NEN IS INVOLVED!
THE ROOM WAS EMPTY!! WE'RE SEARCHING FOR OTHER HIDEOUT LOCATIONS!!

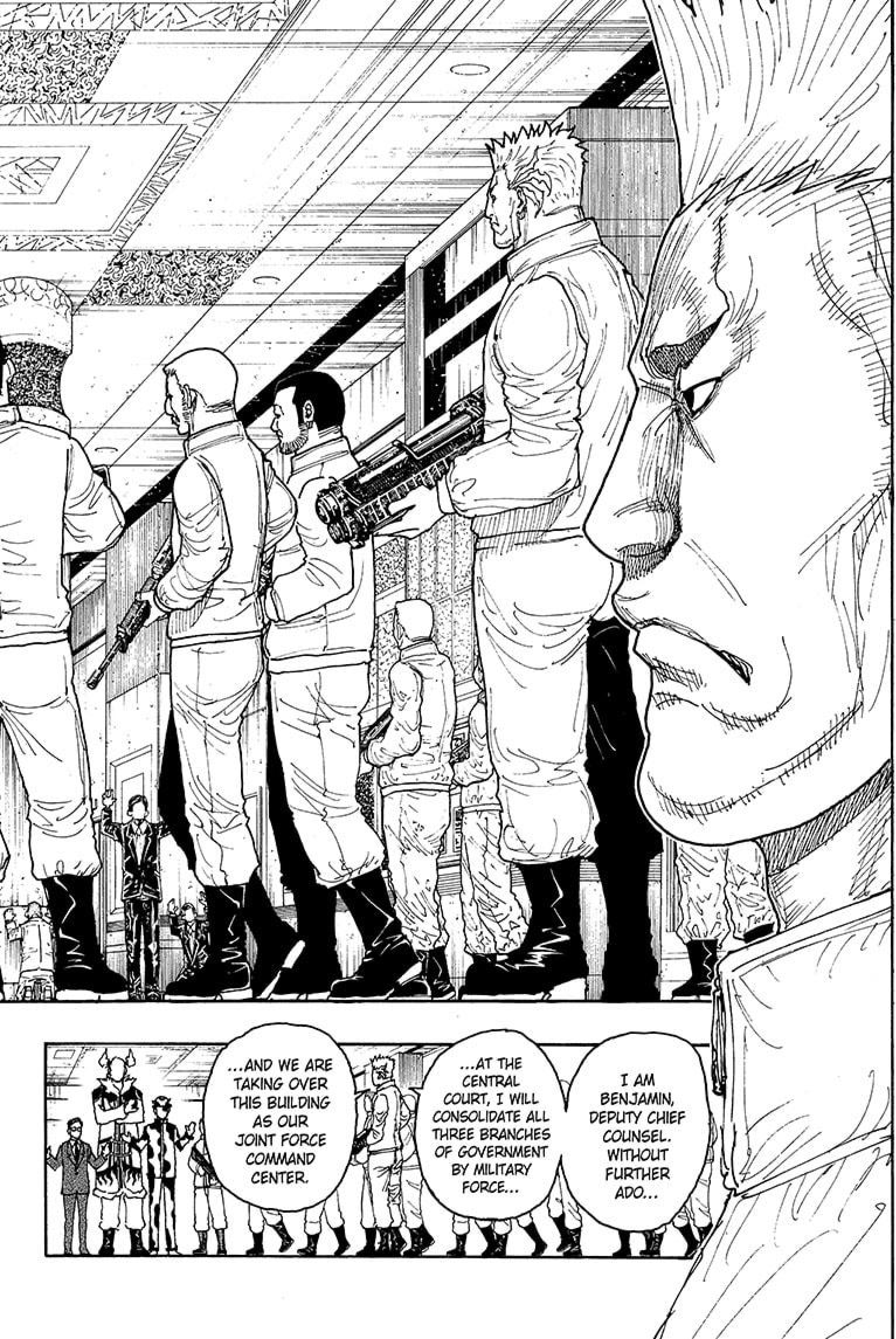

SQUAD 3 WILL DEAL WITH HEIL-LY!! OUR PRIORITY IS SECURING THE PRINCES!!
THIRD PRINCE ZHANG-LEI AND SEVENTH PRINCE LUZURUS ARE CURRENTLY UNACCOUNTED FOR. FIND THEM!! LEAVE THE LOWER-RANKED PRINCES FOR LATER!!
ZHANG-LEI WENT TO TIER 2 RIGHT BEFORE THE DECLARATION, VIA CROSS-BRIDGE FROM INSIDE THE XIU-YU BOSS RESIDENCE!
CURRENTLY CONFIRMING THE ROUTE AND FOLLOWING HIS TRAIL. FOLLOW-UP REPORT IN 15 MINUTES!
ZHANG-LEI LIKELY SOUGHT REFUGE AT THE JUSTICE DEPT.!! IT'S POSSIBLE HE WENT FARTHER DOWN TO MEET UP WITH THE MAFIA!!
TELL THE SQUAD 2 RECON TEAM AND THE SCOUTS TO FOCUS ON ZHANG-LEI!!
YESSIR!!!!

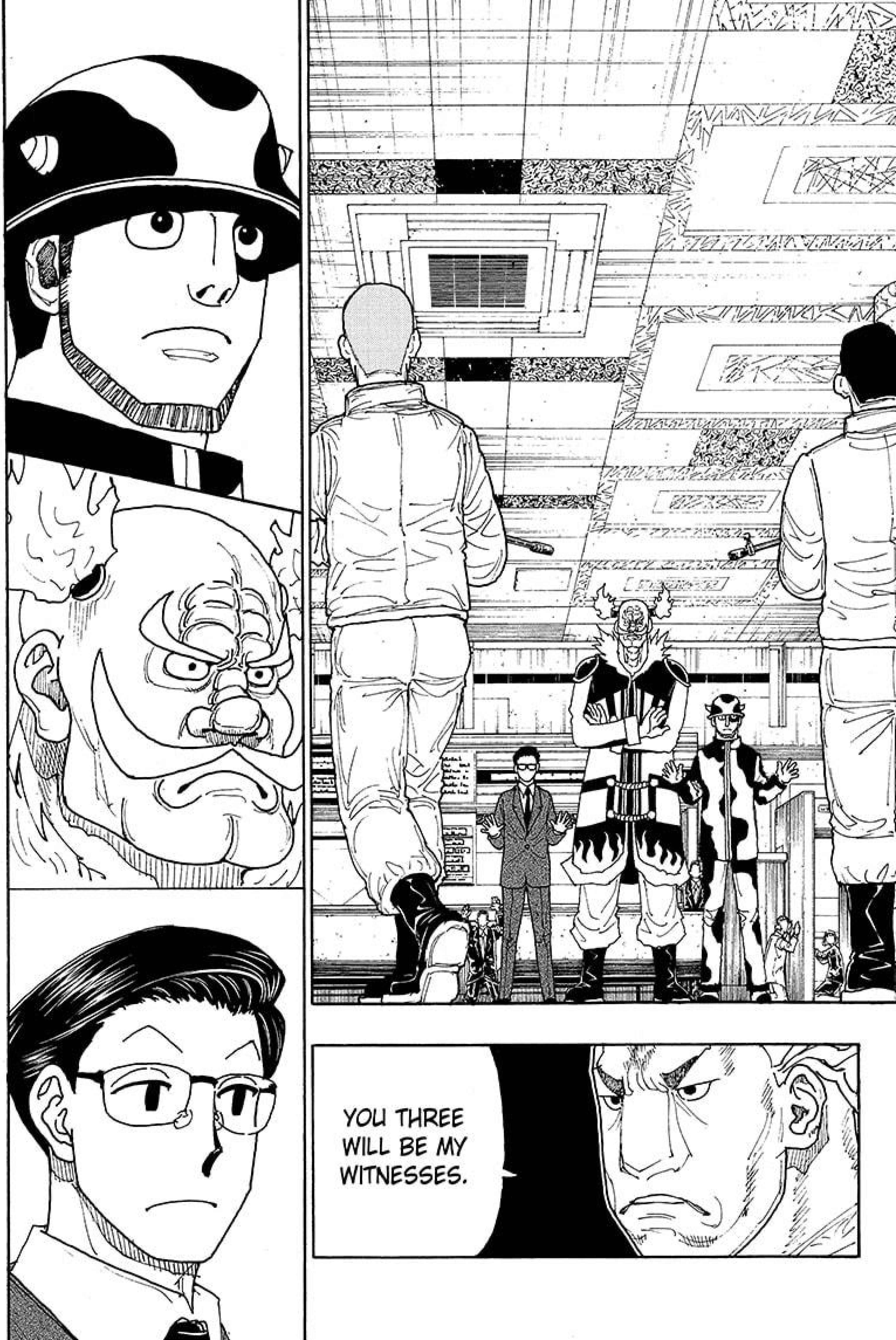

TEN HOURS FROM ONSET TO COMA!! DEATH COMES TWO HOURS AFTER THAT.
I HAVE ABOUT NINE AND A HALF MORE HOURS... I NEED TO ELIMINATE THE PRINCES BY THEN!!

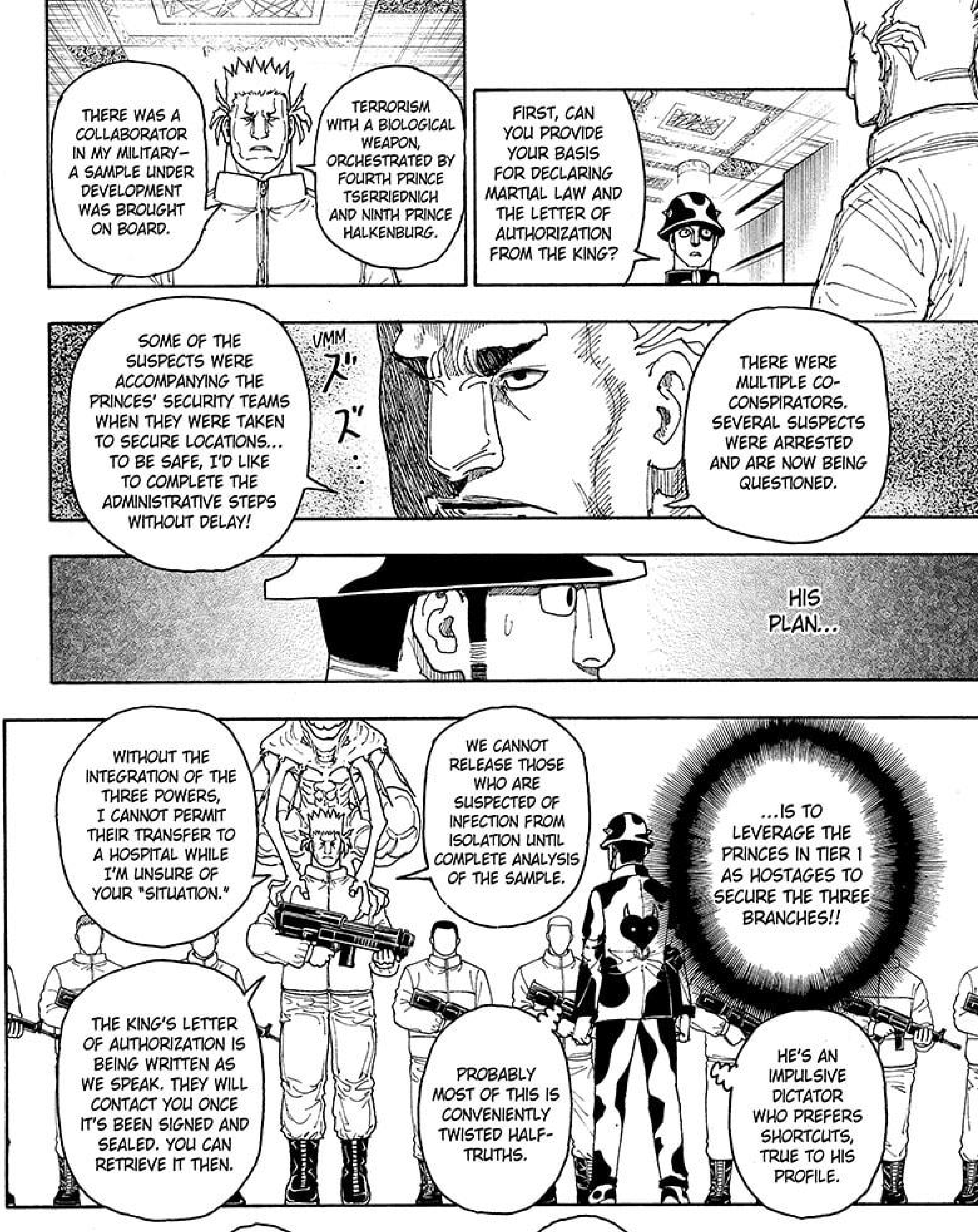

AS LONG AS I AM OFFICIALLY ANOINTED AS SUCCESSOR, EVEN IF I DIE...
FIRST PRINCE BENJAMIN ON DECK!!
I MUST GET FATHER'S DECLARATION OF SUCCESSION AND THE DOCUMENTATION!! THEN, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE TIME REQUIRED FOR THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS OF HAVING MY ILLEGITIMATE CHILD NAMED AS MY OFFICIAL SUCCESSOR, I DON'T HAVE A MOMENT TO LOSE!!

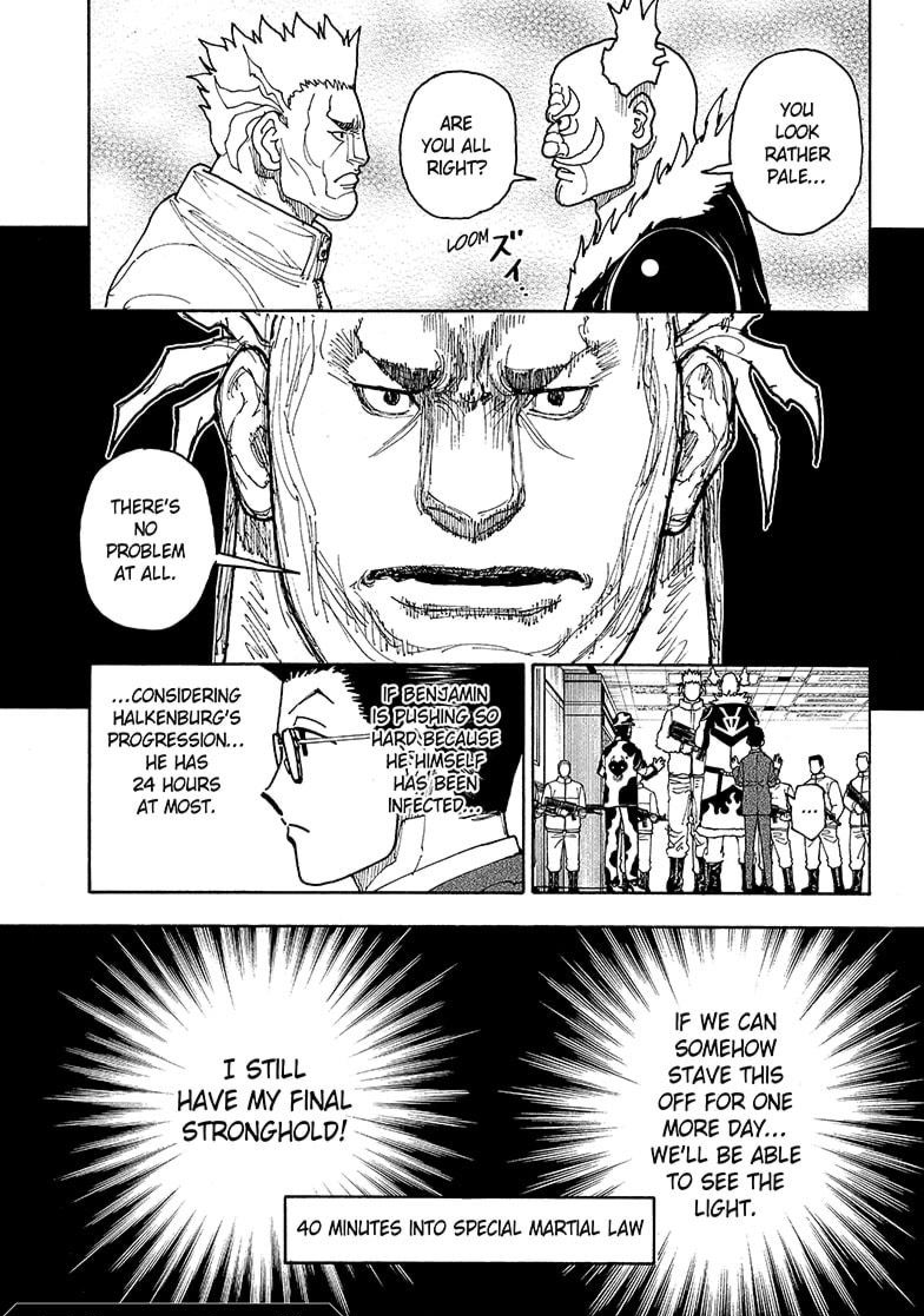

...I CAN HAND THE THRONE OVER TO MY CHILD!!
EMERGENCY LAW ARTICLE 1!! "SUSTAINING THE MONARCHY IN A CRISIS" WILL APPLY!!!

FOUR PRINCES LEFT!!!


I AM BENJAMIN, DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL. WITHOUT FURTHER ADO...
...AT THE CENTRAL COURT, I WILL CONSOLIDATE ALL THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT BY MILITARY FORCE...
...AND WE ARE TAKING OVER THIS BUILDING AS OUR JOINT FORCE COMMAND CENTER.


YOU THREE WILL BE MY WITNESSES.


FIRST, CAN YOU PROVIDE YOUR BASIS FOR DECLARING MARTIAL LAW AND THE LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION FROM THE KING?
TERRORISM WITH A BIOLOGICAL WEAPON, ORCHESTRATED BY FOURTH PRINCE TSERRIEDNICH AND NINTH PRINCE HALKENBURG.
THERE WAS A COLLABORATOR IN MY MILITARY—A SAMPLE UNDER DEVELOPMENT WAS BROUGHT ON BOARD.
THERE WERE MULTIPLE CO-CONSPIRATORS. SEVERAL SUSPECTS WERE ARRESTED AND ARE NOW BEING QUESTIONED.
VMM
ズズ…
SOME OF THE SUSPECTS WERE ACCOMPANYING THE PRINCES' SECURITY TEAMS WHEN THEY WERE TAKEN TO SECURE LOCATIONS… TO BE SAFE, I'D LIKE TO COMPLETE THE ADMINISTRATIVE STEPS WITHOUT DELAY!
HIS PLAN…
…IS TO LEVERAGE THE PRINCES IN TIER 1 AS HOSTAGES TO SECURE THE THREE BRANCHES!!
WE CANNOT RELEASE THOSE WHO ARE SUSPECTED OF INFECTION FROM ISOLATION UNTIL COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE.
WITHOUT THE INTEGRATION OF THE THREE POWERS, I CANNOT PERMIT THEIR TRANSFER TO A HOSPITAL WHILE I'M UNSURE OF YOUR "SITUATION."
HE'S AN IMPULSIVE DICTATOR WHO PREFERS SHORTCUTS, TRUE TO HIS PROFILE.
PROBABLY MOST OF THIS IS CONVENIENTLY TWISTED HALF-TRUTHS.
THE KING'S LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION IS BEING WRITTEN AS WE SPEAK. THEY WILL CONTACT YOU ONCE IT'S BEEN SIGNED AND SEALED. YOU CAN RETRIEVE IT THEN.
LET'S GET THIS DONE.
YOUR HIGHNESS.


YOU LOOK RATHER PALE...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
LOOM ズイ…
THERE'S NO PROBLEM AT ALL.
...
IF BENJAMIN IS PUSHING SO HARD BECAUSE HE HIMSELF HAS BEEN INFECTED...
...CONSIDERING HALKENBURG'S PROGRESSION... HE HAS 24 HOURS AT MOST.
IF WE CAN SOMEHOW STAVE THIS OFF FOR ONE MORE DAY... WE'LL BE ABLE TO SEE THE LIGHT.
I STILL HAVE MY FINAL STRONGHOLD!
40 MINUTES INTO SPECIAL MARTIAL LAW

To be continued!